Caleb Abbott

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Caleb Abbott

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# Caleb Abbott

BY

DEXTER VINTON PIERCE

Wilton, New Hampshire

BOSTON
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# PREFACE

IN offering this story I wish to impress on the minds of the readers that this is a simple country story—a story of rural life which may be found not alone in New Hampshire, but in most of the country districts of New England. The characters are taken from life, the story is founded on fact, with some exaggerations, and if not sensational enough to suit some—or if not of sufficient length to suit others—remember it began where it did and ended where it has. The auction scene, the country hotel, the general store, and the town meeting are all characteristic of rural life. The gossip of the men around the country store is not overdrawn. The author has endeavored to make the story—to quote from a letter from Dr. Abbott to the author—"clean and sweet, mirthful and pathetic, fresh and savory, and as wholesome as the New Hampshire hills amidst which its scenes are cast." If my readers can agree with him after reading its pages I shall be satisfied with my effort.

DEXTER VINTON PIERCE

"Maplehurst" Wilton, N. H.

To my dear children
this book
is lovingly dedicated

# Caleb Abbott

## CHAPTER I.

### THE FLOOD.

"I think it safe till daylight, Seth, don't you?"

Thus spoke one of two men who for six long hours had been walking back and forth along the banks of New Hampshire's greatest stream,—the Merrimack. The rain, which had been falling continually for three days, still fell in torrents, and both men were drenched to the skin. They seemed to feel but little fatigue, yet anxiety was written on both their faces. One, Seth Arnold, was a typical New England Yankee, a slow-going, hard-working farmer, tall, lean, weather-beaten, withal shrewd and honest. The other, David Abbott, although himself a farmer, was a different type from Seth; he was shorter in stature, more solidly built, finer skinned; and he had laughing

eyes. Both men were natives of this town of Rushton, and had been friends and neighbors all their lives.

"Yes, David, I think it safe till then, but it will have to go. I agree with you that nothing can save it; the water has risen several inches since dark and is still rising rapidly. With the snow not yet gone from the northern hills and with no indication of the rain ceasing there is no hope."

"Well," remarked Seth, "here comes the relief watch," as two men were dimly seen approaching.

"As we can do no good here, we may as well go home, and get a cup of hot coffee and some rest. We may need all our strength tomorrow." How true those words! Little did they think that before another day should dawn one of those sturdy sons of New Hampshire would be carried away in the mad waters to a final rest.

No one who lived in New Hampshire at the time our story begins will ever forget the spring of 189--. The winter had not been unusually severe, the snow-fall hardly up to the average, but the spring was backward; the ground frozen hard and quantities of snow still lay upon field and

roadway. It was nearly the middle of April when the first sign of spring appeared. The warm sun had melted some of the snow, but back among the hills and mountains where the sun could hardly penetrate much snow still remained. Then suddenly the wind which had blown so long from the north shifted to the south and the rain began to fall softly at first like an ordinary April shower, then faster and fiercer it came in sheets, until it seemed as if the heavens had opened, and were determined to weep all at once all the tears they had been storing for years. For three days and nights did it rain; warm, uncomfortable days for this time of the year, and the snow, melting fast, together with the rain falling on the frozen ground, flowed down the hills on both sides of the river into its natural drain, the river itself, until it could hold no more. Banks were overflowed, dams and bridges were swept away; stock and even buildings were carried down stream, until for miles up the river, but one dam remained, the one we speak of.

Rushton itself was a small village situated on the easterly bank of the Merrimack, though here

and there was a farm on the westerly side, also within the town limits. The principal business, and in fact the only business except farming and lumbering, was that of an extensive paper pulp mill, whose owners had erected at a large expense, this great dam, which had thus far held back thousands of tons of water. Already a small stream was here and there trickling through the structure, and it seemed but a question of time before the whole structure itself must give way, unless the rain should cease at once. Yet up to the present time it had stood with almost human doggedness the mad rush of waters hurled at it.

David Abbott owned a farm on the east side of the river a short way out from the main village, situated on an elevation which overlooked the beautiful town, with its hills beyond, while away to the south like a great silver serpent could be seen the Merrimack as it wound along through the valley. Far to the north could be seen a village or two, or here and there a small settlement; beyond all else the mighty mountains.

Arriving home, David was met at the door by his excellent wife and only son, Caleb. The youth

was a strong, strapping boy of nineteen; nearly six feet in his stockings, and built to stay; one would hardly call him handsome, but his face, with a downy beard just starting, a freckle here and there, and dark curly hair, was honest, weather-burned, and toughened by New England's severe climate. He was just such a boy as you will find throughout New England; the boy whose home is on a farm, and who looks the soldier before the hard work in the field, with the rather difficult feat of plowing on a side hill, gives to him that stoop or shambling gait which denotes the farmer's bodily work.

"Well, father," they both asked almost in a breath, "what news, good or bad?"

"Bad, very bad," David replied, "the dam can't last another day, perhaps not another hour. Mattie, can you give me a cup of hot coffee? I'll change my coat, and then, my son, we will go back to see if we can help."

It was hardly daylight when father and son were ready to start for the scene of trouble. Caleb stooped to kiss his mother as was his habit when leaving home. "Me, too," said his father and he

laughingly kissed his wife. Just why, he could not tell: it was many years since he had kissed his wife. Honest, hard working, old fashioned couple, living as many others do for years together in trouble and prosperity, side by side, helping each other, loving each other from year to year, yet giving no signs of endearment. Is it necessary? Such people understand each other, what a little thing a kiss! Yet what memories sometimes cling to one, such a one as David then left on his wife's toil-worn cheek. What happiness was wrought by it into her sorrow in the years that followed!

Hardly had they reached the bank when a wild cry of help was heard above the storm. The water spreading across both sides of the valley had completely surrounded a small cottage below the dam. Even now the water reached beyond the lower windows, and in the attic window was a woman with two small children frantically calling for help.

David, rushing to the water's edge where now a crowd had congregated, asked, "Is no one going to the rescue?"

"No, God help them, there is no hope!" said Seth, who was already on the scene. "I am an old

man, yet if I was young again I would not venture it. See how the house divides the water as it rushes both sides of the building, a raging whirlpool."

"There's an old punt we just hauled up," said another. "But no man on earth could pull through that current."

"No," said David, "no one man can beat those waters; perhaps two can, though. Who will volunteer to go with me?" A silence fell upon the crowd. Not a voice replied.

"Cowards, all of you!" angrily spoke David. "Then I go alone! Would you see those children and that woman perish before your eyes without lifting a hand to help them? The dam is already breaking up. Quick; not a moment to lose! A hand to the boat. We will carry it up stream and let it float down. Run you, Seth, for a rope and grapple. I may be able to make fast to a window or door."

Seth returned with the rope and grapple while willing hands hastily pushed the boat into the mad waters. David was about to jump in himself when a voice at his side calmly said, "Wait! I will go

with you." David paused for a moment and looked up to see his own son about to jump into the boat.

"No, no, boy, not you!" said David. "You must stay behind for your mother's sake. It's more than likely that my errand will fail."

"No, you sha'n't go alone," bravely replied Caleb. "It needs a strong arm to battle that current, stronger than yours, father; and if God sees fit to take us both, God will also care for mother."

A look of pride crossed his father's face. "Noble boy," he murmured; and then added, "Come if you insist. There's no time to lose."

In another instant the current had caught the boat, carrying it directly and swiftly toward the house. Caleb had grasped the oars and was doing his best to retard the onward flight, while his father stood ready with the grapple. Another instant and the boat shot straight at the house. Quick as a flash it was made fast; the grapple had held! A mighty cheer went up from the crowd on shore.

"You are the strongest, Caleb, and will need all your strength in the battle to come. I will go

in after the woman and children." The waters now reached within a few feet of the window where the sufferers were clinging, and David, drawing himself into the window, passed the children and then the woman through the window to his son below. The grapple had held against the mighty force up to this time, but just as David swung himself through the window with one last effort, the sill gave way. The boat shot forty feet down the stream and David dropped into the water below.

Two cries, "Mattie!" "Caleb!" and then the cold icy waters hurled him hither and thither, now up, now down in the mad waters, rushing, gurgling. . . . Three days later they found David Abbott's body far down the valley. The waters had receded, leaving it in a clump of bushes where it had been caught. One of God's noblemen gone home to rest.

* * * * *

If you are driving with a native of New Hampshire through any small village you will be told the history of such a village in a remarkably short time: "Jim Johnson lives in that shanty down

there; he's a no good, hot (drunk) 'bout all the time; goes fishing in the spring, gunning in the fall, and down to the County Farm in the winter. Get's a five spec or barrel of flour for his vote 'lection time, when the X Y & Z have a man running for the legislature; that's 'bout all he does earn." "Becky Farnsworth lives over there in that white house. She's a widder, pretty well-to-do, too. Her old man used to be road-agent; got fifteen hundred a year out the town to fix up the highways, and spent 'bout five hundred of it. Stole the rest, I figure. Then, that's nothing agin him. They all do it if they get the chance." "See that big square house up on the hill? Deacon Cummings lives up there. Worth fifty thousand, so they say."

So runs on the narrative throughout the whole list of inhabitants. You wonder how Deacon Cummings ever got fifty thousand together in this out of the way place. Yet every village has its Deacon Cummings; every Deacon Cummings has his barrel. Let us stop a moment, perhaps we can figure it out; after all, it is very simple. The proverbial Deacon gets all the ready money there is

in town, and after getting it he keeps it. If he begins business at twenty, at seventy he has accumulated all the money in circulation in the village and it naturally increases in the fifty years. The Deacon keeps the general store, perhaps the only store for miles around, and the sign reads something like this: "Olando W. Cummings, Dealer in Dry Goods & Groceries; Boots & Shoes; Hay & Grain; Tobacco & Cigars; Paints & Oils, Hardware, Tinware, Crockery & Glass-ware, Ready-made Clothing; Gents' Furnishing Goods; Hats & Caps; Notions, etc., etc., etc., Fish Hooks & Coffins; Stoves & Ranges a specialty: Teaming done."

The farmers from 'Slab City, Mud Village, Sketer Holler, Punkinville and other outlying districts, as well as the villagers in which the store is situated, bring in their eggs and produce in exchange for store goods. Thus Olando Cummings makes a profit on both ends. Olando Cummings also buys timber top; and runs a portable mill. Lumber is shipped to the market for cash. He also deals in insurance, real estate, and mortgages. Mortgages bring interest; interest is cash. In fact

everything that Olando Cummings touches turns into cash, and that cash never gets circulated in the town again, but is laid away in good securities and investments to accumulate still farther. That is how Deacon Cummings becomes the richest man of the town.

That is how Cyrus Whitney got to be the richest man in Rushton. Cyrus was a widower with one child, an only daughter just budding into womanhood. Handsome, bright and generous, she was in direct contrast to her grasping father, who was a hard-visaged man of sixty, tall, lank in figure, and endowed with a squeaking voice.

Their home was situated on a hill overlooking the village. The farm for the most part lay sloping to the south; with the house, itself almost a mansion; large, square, colonial style; wide verandas on two sides; gravelled driveways leading up to it both from the north and south, lined on either side with spreading, old-growth maples. It was indeed an imposing place. Far from cheerless was the interior. Much of the furniture had descended from grandfather to father and from father to son. It was old fashioned of course, and a large part of

it was massive, heavy mahogany. The walls were papered with big patterns; the studding was high; and open fireplaces in many of the rooms suggested hospitality.

Seated before a roaring open fire sat Cyrus Whitney and his daughter, Hilda, for Cyrus was troubled with rheumatism and the three days' rain had sent a chill even into this snug living room. The flames lit up with a ruddy glow, falling alike on the lantern jaw of father and the peach-like cheek of daughter.

"But, father, I am serious; they say the dam will go, and think of the poor in the valley below. Then, perhaps I can be of some help. Almost everyone in the village is there, watching and waiting to do what good he or she can while we sit here warm and comfortable without lifting our hand or even saying a word to help the unfortunate."

"Humph!" replied her father, lowering his paper for a moment and glancing at his daughter over his spectacles, "Let them take care of themselves. What do they live down there in the damp valley for? They take their chances. I stand to

lose as much as they. There's hardly a farm in the valley that I have not a claim upon. If they are washed away don't I lose?"

"Yes, father, perhaps," rather doubtfully. "But you only own a part of each farm and your claims are secured. Think of the poor farmer who has almost nothing, and can raise no crops this year. Then again lives even may be in danger."

"Well! you have been out in rains before, I guess this won't hurt you, either. Go if you want to, but don't go doing anything foolish, or promising any relief from me. I won't have it. See? They have made their beds. Let them lie on them. And Hilda, don't go and bring any half starved, broken-limbed old man or woman here, because I won't let them in."

So, as he had had his say and had yielded to his daughter's wish to go out into the storm, as he usually did yield to his only daughter, when he was not hurting his own interests, he took up the Manchester Union, chuckling to himself as he thought, "If they can't raise any crops this year why they can't pay their interest and the farms will be mine through foreclosure," while reading at the

same time the reporters' tales of what was taking place at his very door.

Hilda, stopping only to put on proper garments, went out into the driving storm and hastened toward the dam to see if her small hands could in any way help some poor unfortunate. When nearly to the fated dam she heard a faint rumbling, then with a mighty crash and roar the entire centre of the dam gave way, releasing the vast body of water which it had held back. It had been a mighty battle between the science of man and the unseen mysteries of nature, but nature had won at last. It was indeed a scene never to be forgotten. Pausing only for an instant, Hilda hurried below where she could see the crowd of watchers on the bank, and among them two men carrying some one on a door, which had been pressed into service for a litter.

When Caleb saw his father disappear his first thought was to save him if possible. But as the boat rushed down the stream and he could see nothing of David, he realized with anguish that nothing could be done; that his father was lost. There was no time for sorrow then. He must do

his best to save the woman and children for whose lives his brave father had given up his own. With a strength almost superhuman, Caleb headed the boat inshore, but do as he would he could not gain a foot, the old flat-bottom boat, square at both bow and stern, could not be steered, but continually swung around and around in the rapidly flowing waters. Something had to be done, and done quickly. With one last effort he headed the boat toward shore, and luckily was caught in a current which carried him some distance nearer the bank than before. Quickly standing up and grasping the rope and grapple, Caleb hurled it with all his might toward the shore. Caleb was unusually strong; he had been an adept on the crew at college, and his strength and science did him good service today. The grapple held. It had caught in some clump of bushes in the meadow beneath the waters. Though they were still far from shore, the waters were here somewhat calmer, and Caleb, catching the rope which was still tied to the boat, pulled until they neared the grapple. Then, quickly slashing the rope with his knife, he re-

turned to his oars, and again fought for victory. Inch by inch he neared the shore. The crowd all the time followed at the water's edge, cheering and encouraging him by shouts, as the boat still drifted far inland. At last the shore was reached, but even before it was reached willing hands had dragged the boat to safety, just as the dam gave way.

"Oh! who is it? Can you do nothing? Is he dead?" Hilda cried.

"No, he ain't dead, but he's dead blowed. Guess he's lost 'bout all his wind," some one replied.

"It's Caleb Abbott," spoke another. "He just saved a woman and two children; Fred Anderson's woman and kids. Fred's off on a drunk somewhere. He went off last night and left 'em all alone, and when they woke up this morning the house was surrounded by water. Wonder it didn't float off before. But it's gone now all right. The boy didn't have any time to spare."

"Brave, noble Caleb!" said Hilda softly. "Are they taking him home? If so I will run ahead and tell Mrs. Abbott not to be alarmed."

"Yes, miss, that's where they are taking him," replied one of the men.

Hilda ran on toward the house, and met Mrs. Abbott in the doorway. She told her not to be alarmed, even though friends were bringing Caleb home. "He is not hurt; he has only fainted from exhaustion."

"But David?" cried Mrs. Abbott. "What of David?"

"They did not mention your husband," replied Hilda. "Perhaps he is with them. I did not notice, because I ran away at once to tell you about Caleb."

In the meantime the men with the litter had arrived, and although Caleb insisted that he was himself again, they brought him in, and sat him in the great armchair by the fire. Mrs. Abbott, in the care and anxiety for Caleb, forgot for the time being the absence of David. Hilda, however, inquiring of Seth where David was, learned the truth from Seth, who with tears in his eyes, told her the brave story. Her kind heart wept in sorrow for the widow. In fact the loss was her own sorrow, too. David, and his kindly ways,

were very familiar to her. He always had a pleasant word for everybody and often stopped to talk with her and in a friendly way to tell her how handsome she was growing. Hilda and Caleb had been schoolmates together, and she had always been welcome at the Abbott farm, but since her father had grown so rich he had forbidden her calling at the Abbott home. But Caleb she could never forget, and when they met by chance they had many a pleasant chat together.

Hilda, returning into the house, saw Caleb still sitting in the great armchair, while his mother had just asked him of his father. With a forced smile he greeted Hilda, holding out his hand, which she willingly took as he asked, "How do I look as an invalid?"

Hilda could she have answered as her heart prompted would have said that she never had seen a nobler or handsomer invalid; but she simply replied that she had heard of his daring rescue and hoped he would soon be better.

"Oh, I am all right now," replied Caleb. "Just a little tired; that's all."

"But father!" said Mrs. Abbott. "You haven't

told me of him. Is he hurt? You are keeping something from me, Caleb; what is it? Tell me,—he can't be lost!"

"Yes, mother," said Caleb, laying his hand lovingly on her silvery hair, while her head dropped on his knee. "Father has gone home to rest," and Hilda stole softly out of the room, leaving them alone with their great sorrow.

## CHAPTER II.

### LOOKING THE FUTURE IN THE FACE.

A few days after the funeral, which had been largely attended, for David was a favorite with old and young, Caleb and his mother sat alone discussing the future. It had been news to them and sad news indeed coming as it did at this time to know that Cyrus Whitney held a mortgage on their home for five hundred dollars. The amount alone would have caused Caleb no uneasiness had it been held by some other party, or had the rate of interest been the usual six per cent. But Shylock Whitney, as he was usually called, did not lend money at six per cent. His interest often amounted to more than the principal in a year or two, and the farmers who were so unfortunate as to get into his clutches seldom got out of them, taking as it did all the money they could raise to meet the interest alone, without paying the prin-

cipal. David Abbott, when he borrowed the money, saw his way clear, or thought he did, to meet both principal and interest in a short time, and not wishing to worry his wife and son, kept the matter to himself. It is true that his wife had also signed the note; but with perfect faith in her husband she gave her signature, with little thought at the time.

For years there had been a tract of woodland on the Abbott farm, and David, when Caleb was a little boy, used to take him by the hand and pointing to the trees then in their infancy would say, "Those, my son, are yours; that is your schooling, your education." And Caleb, not quite understanding, would say, "Yes, papa." Caleb grew and the trees grew, too; pine, hemlock and spruce, until now the timber had gotten its growth, and the little boy had almost reached his manhood. So these trees, these sacred trees, had remained untouched all these years until this past winter, when David had begun to fell them; working in all sorts of weather, getting the logs ready for use, some for market, some for the pulp mill. He had been obliged to hire help, and he had also bought

a pair of horses in order to market the timber at once. It was for this purpose that he had raised the money on his farm from Cyrus Whitney.

In fact, it was only a few days before the storm that the last logs were hauled from the woods to the river bank to be floated down stream when the rains and melting snows should flood the river. How well the river was flooded we already know. David, like many others in this valley, had he lived, would have been ruined. The logs had been held back until the dam gave way and then they, with those of many others, were swept away down the river. Thousands of feet of timber; a winter's work; and five hundred dollars gone in a moment! The logs were scattered no one knew where, and a total loss was the result.

As the interest on the mortgage was now almost due, it was this matter which was under discussion.

"Mother," said Caleb, "there is but one thing to do, and that must be done at once. We must dispose of some stock. I won't sell the horses because I expect them to help us make a living. The dam will be rebuilt; there are roads and

bridges to be repaired, foundations to be relaid, and many other things to be done that will require lots of teaming. The rate of pay around here for a man and pair of horses is three fifty a day, and I don't see how I could earn more at present. Luckily we have hay enough to carry us through, and also some grain. I propose to turn teamster. The farm work I will do before and after hours, but I can't take care of ten head of cattle alone, and we can't afford to hire help. There is no money, I know positively, in selling milk to the milk trust, although father thought there was. What I propose to do with your permission is to sell six cows, keeping the two Jerseys and two Ayeshires for butter. Joe Frye over in Weed Village offered father two hundred dollars for the four Holsteins a few weeks ago. I shall see him, and if his offer still holds good we can pay the present interest. Then with the proceeds from the other two cows, which being farrow won't bring much, we can pay the funeral expenses and the grocer's bill. These, mother, are my suggestions; if you can think of any other better way out of our difficulties please say so."

"No, Caleb," replied Mrs. Abbott, "I can see no other way. In fact I think your plan is the only way, although I dislike to think of your doing such heavy work together with the farm duties. You are fitted for something better than a day laborer. Your father always wanted you to become a lawyer."

"Yes, and perhaps I might have been, had he lived. Poor Father! He had great hopes for me. But fate has ruled otherwise. The lawyer must go. For the present at least I must work at what can bring the most money. I am young; perhaps in the future I shall be something more than a laborer," said Caleb, with emphasis.

"Well," said his mother, in reply, "we can work together. There are only two of us now," sadly. "You will be away all day, so that I can help quite a little myself. I can make butter, and I shall raise more chickens. In fact I see no reason why our egg- and butter-money won't pay our living expenses, so that you can have your wages to yourself."

"Yes, mother; you are bound to help. With all

your cares and work you are still looking for more."

"Why Caleb," replied his mother, "I shall have lots of time to myself. I want something to keep me busy. This is light labor and will keep me from getting lonely while you are away."

"Well, mother, if you insist on adding these new duties to yourself I won't object; but we are keeping late hours. This won't do for a laboring man. It is already ten o'clock, and I have all I can do tomorrow." So Caleb kissed his mother, and taking up his lamp proceeded upstairs to bed.

Boyhood days are over. Tomorrow, Caleb, you enter into a new life—labor.

In the general store and at the post office the flood was still the general topic of discussion. As usual in the evening the "regulars" were hanging around the store. The nights were still cold and a brisk wood fire burned in the great stove in the centre of the store. Seated around the stove were Seth Arnold, Hen Gilson, Deacon Patch, Ed Bean and several others of minor importance.

"Well," said Ed, "now David has gone, I guess

his boy will have to come down off his high hoss, and go to work."

"Yes, I suppose so," said the Deacon. "And I guess he can do it too. Mark my words, he won't lose any time doin' it, either. He's a likely young feller. 'Twan't all his doin's going to college. His father wanted to cut him out for a lawyer."

"And you can't blame him any, either," spoke up Seth. "What's farming amount to? You get a living, that's all. And if things don't go right, or if the weather goes wrong, a mighty poor living at that you get! Everything is Trusts now-a-days, and a poor man ain't got any show. You've got to sell milk to the milk trust and let them make the price. Then you've got to buy grain of the milk trust and let them make the price on that; then there's your surplus; and when you settle up you're mighty lucky if you don't owe the milk trust something. If you've got a little timber you've got to sell that to a trust. Even your eggs! In fact you ain't got any show at all now-a-days on a farm." So saying, Seth crossed one long leg over the other, and, borrowing a match from Hen,

proceeded to light his corn-cob pipe, while he meditated on the wrongs in this world.

"Well," said Ed, "he's got a right smart team of horse flesh, and he himself is as strong as an ox. He can get all the work he wants, too. I heard something 'bout his doing teaming."

"The boy ought to do well," said the Deacon, in reply. "He's got the whole town back of him; 'tain't many would have done what he did, rescuing Jim Anderson's folks. 'Tain't many could 'a' done it, either."

"Speaking of Anderson," said Seth, "they say old Shylock got bit there. Had a mortgage on the place, and now there ain't no place left; house and building floated away, and no land left that you could realize on. I wouldn't swap my yearling for what's left, and they say Cyrus had six hundred on it."

"Well, old Shylock can stand it, I guess," said another. "He's got a mortgage on 'bout everything in this town."

"Well, Ned," exclaimed Seth, rising with a yawn and addressing the clerk who had been an earnest listener to their conversation, "put me up 'bout

five pounds sugar, and a cod fish, and a piece terbaca. Guess I'll be poking along." Seth's departure broke up the meeting for that night, and soon all departed for their respective homes to meet again on the morrow.

Bright and early Caleb rose. The sun had not yet risen, but looking out his window he saw the whole east lighted up in a blaze of glory. Hastily dressing he went down stairs, and after starting a fire for his mother and putting on a kettle of fresh water, he went to the barn to do his chores with a kind word to horses and cattle alike. He fed them with a generous hand, and soon the familiar crunch, crunch, crunch, a sound so musical to all who love stock, fell pleasantly on his ears, as the critters munched their feed.

Have you ever been up before sunrise in the country, and worked or walked for an hour or two before breakfast? If not, try it some time, it is well worth the effort; and it is better medicine than all the spring tonics in the world.

Breakfast was all ready and steaming hot when Caleb returned to the kitchen. Hot corn bread, hasty pudding, fried salt pork and eggs, fried-over

potatoes, and coffee with cream. Caleb thought it was a breakfast good enough for a laboring man. Of course the man of wealth would have his fruit, a miniature chop, or perhaps a small tenderloin; or if he had eggs, bacon would be served instead of salt pork. But after all there is not much difference in the food of wealth and that of the ordinary family.

After breakfast Caleb returned to the barn, cleaned the horses and hitched Jack, the off horse, into the family democrat and started for Weed Village to see Joe Frye about selling the cattle. The blue birds had appeared and were flitting about from one apple tree to another, looking for the old familiar hole where they were to build their nests and start housekeeping for another season. The pussy willows had already burst forth. Here and there a chipmunk saucily perched himself on some wall top, and, on being discovered, with a shrill chirp disappeared from view. The sun was bright, the air balmy. The winter was over, and the whole world seemed glad. Weed Village was an eight miles' drive up hill and down. Caleb saw

a familiar face or two and passed the time of day with them.

"Pretty good doin's," greeted Seth, who was topping the walls around his pasture, getting ready to turn the cattle out.

"Yes," replied Caleb, "the rains have left the roads good and hard where they haven't washed them away."

"Frost's all out of the ground," said Seth, "guess ploughing'll take hold next week."

"Yes," replied Caleb, with a laugh, "I guess I'll have to put my hand to the plough this year."

"'Twon't hurt you any, boy," answered Seth, as Caleb drove off; "only don't get in the rut and follow it all your life."

"Good morning, Caleb," said a bright, sweet voice. Caleb started. He had been busy with his thoughts about the mortgage. What if he could not raise the money to meet the interest? What if Joe Frye would not buy the cattle? Then they would be turned out of their pleasant home! For a moment Caleb hated the man in whose power he was, but the hatred disappeared from his face and a smile spread over his features

as he saw the daughter of this very man standing by the roadside to let him pass. How lovely she was, with a bunch of pussy willows in one hand, while with the other she daintily held up her skirts.

"Oh! good morning, Hilda," replied Caleb, to her greeting. "I almost passed without seeing you."

"Yes," laughingly replied Hilda, "if I had not saluted you I think you would have run over me."

"I am sorry I was so stupid," he replied, "I was busy with my thoughts."

"Can I buy them?" sweetly asked Hilda. "You know the old saying, 'a penny for your thoughts'. I really think by the way you looked it would be a 'good investment,' as father would say." But she quickly added, seeing his brow darken at her father's name, "Never mind, I won't try to buy them today. Isn't it a grand morning?"

"Yes," replied Caleb, "a perfect day. Is your father at home?"

"Yes, and he will be at home all day, for although the sky is so bright he is suffering from his rheumatism badly. Did you wish to see him?"

"No, not now. Perhaps when I come back from Weed Village. I am sorry he suffers so."

"So you are going to Weed Village?" exclaimed Hilda. "Well, don't let me detain you; it's a long, hard drive. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Caleb. Looking back he saw her standing there by the roadside still gazing after him. And he thought how handsome and womanly she had grown lately. It seemed but such a short time ago since they had gone romping through the meadows together for flowers, gathered nuts together in the fall, or coasted on the same sled in the winter. With a sigh he thought of the difference between them now; she the daughter of the richest man in Rushton, he a laboring man. But he vowed to himself that some day he would be rich himself; something more than a laborer; and then, if she was still free—"But get up, Jack," ended his dreaming.

And Hilda? Her memory, too, went back to those happy school days; she thought how Caleb had changed. He seemed so serious, and even worried. He used to be brimful of fun and

laughter, but now even his smile for her seemed forced.

Still thinking of Hilda, Caleb arrived at Joe Frye's. Susie Frye came to the door. She had seen the team coming into the yard, and in answer to Caleb's inquiry for Joe, said with a giggle (Susie Frye always giggled when she spoke to a man). "Yes, Joe's round somewhere; guess he's down to the south pasture. He spoke of putting up some barbed-wire there today. 'Most time to turn the critters out. Drive your horse in the shed and I'll holler to him." So saying, Susie walked down the lane, and "hollering" as only a country girl can, until Joe came "poking up" into sight.

"What is it, Sue?"

"Caleb Abbott's come to see you 'bout something," Sue replied.

"Oh!" said Joe, "I guess it's about them Holsteins."

"Got ready to sell them yet, Caleb?" he asked of Caleb, who had also come down the lane and joined the brother and sister.

"Yes, I'll come right down to business. I am going to sell them, and as you made father a fair

offer I thought I would see you. If your offer still holds good, you can have them."

"Well," drawled Joe, "I did make your father a good offer some time ago. Two hundred I think it was. But they were just in then, they ain't worth that now."

"I don't know about that," replied Caleb. "They are all new milch, and I think I could get that 'most anywhere. I would prefer to sell them to you, as you would pay cash and that's what I want now. I can't take any sixty days' notes."

"Perhaps if you threw in one of those farrow cows we might come to terms," drawled Joe.

"No," said Caleb, "I could not think of that. They are worth two hundred of anybody's money. I could get that, and perhaps more, at auction."

"But there would be the commission and advertising to come out of that," shrewdly suggested Joe.

"Yes, that's true, but if you want them, they're cheap at two hundred. There's others who do want them, but I have given you first chance."

"Throw in the brindle farrar and it's a trade,"

said Joe, closing one eye and looking at Caleb with the other. But Caleb was firm.

"No," he answered. "Two hundred if you want them; if you don't, there's no more to be said." And Caleb began to back his horse out of the shed.

Joe had now nearly whittled the stick through on which he had been industriously working during their talk. A little pile of shavings already nearly hid the toe of one great boot and had even begun to cover the other. Caleb well knew that by the time the stick was whittled through it would be "yes" or "no." You can't come to any decision on a trade with a stick half whittled, you know.

"Hold on," said Joe, "it's most dinner time. Stay and have a bite with us, and perhaps we can come to terms."

"I'm sorry," replied Caleb. "I should like to stop, but I promised Mother I would be back to dinner. She will keep it waiting for me." So saying Caleb jumped into his team and was about to start when the stick flew in two.

"Say! You ain't going, be you? Just a minute. You drive them cattle over tomorrow or next day

and if they get here in good condition I'll have a check for you for two hundred. But you ought to throw in the brindle; two hundred's a lot of money these days."

"I know it is," answered Caleb. "But if I did not need the money I would not sell the cattle. You can look for me inside forty-eight hours. Go long," with a chirp to Jack, and Caleb headed for home in a cheerful frame of mind. Their home was safe for the present, at least.

## CHAPTER III.

### RENEWING OLD FRIENDSHIPS.

In a house in one of the most fashionable up-town parts of New York sat a man of about fifty years. Portly, and prosperous-looking, was Samuel Upton. Born in Rushton, when that town consisted of but few houses and those houses were scattered far and near, young Upton, at the death of his parents, being more than ordinarily ambitious, had sold out the old homestead for a small amount, but which looked large to him, and, shaking the dust of Rushton from his feet, wended his way to New York to make his fortune.

Fortune had indeed smiled upon him, and being a boy of good habits and more than usual intelligence he had secured a position as messenger in a bank; and he had, as the years passed on in service, and increasing responsibility, become President of this very bank. He had married rather

late in life an excellent lady of good family who had died a few years before, leaving an only daughter. This daughter was now in her eighteenth year, and it was of her Mr. Upton was thinking. She had not been in good health of late. The old family doctor had recommended "a change;" "change of scene, change of diet, change of air, in fact, Upton, change of everything. Let her see pine trees instead of brick houses; cows instead of street cars; farmers instead of police; dirt instead of pavements; in other words, take her to the country where everything is different. Let her hear the birds, see the flowers, drink the pure air, smell the new earth. That will put the bloom in her cheek if anything will."

Samuel Upton's thought wandered back to his boyhood days, and to his boyhood chum, David Abbott. He wondered what had become of David. It would do no harm to write and see if he was still in Rushton. He thought of the school days. He and David had led in all the games, while he himself led in studies. He thought of Mattie, too, David's wife. He and David had been rivals at school. He had heard afterwards of David's mar-

riage to her. "Yes, the very place for my daughter, if they will take her to board," thought Mr. Upton; "I will write at once."

The cattle had been delivered, the interest paid to old Shylock; and the load was lifted from Caleb's mind. When, a few days later he was hired to do part of the teaming for the new dam, his cup of happiness was full; did I say happiness? I hardly meant that. He still felt the loss of his father, but he bravely tried to hide his feelings from his mother. Indeed, it was only as they kissed each other "good night," that they let themselves feel each other's sorrow. During this time Caleb had worked early and late, ploughing, harrowing and planting such seeds as could be planted at this season of the year.

Caleb was about to start for the post office when he saw Seth coming up the hill.

"Hullo, Seth," greeted Caleb. "Anything wrong?"

"No," replied Seth, "I want to borrow your spring tooth harrow, if you ain't going to use it. My old spike tooth's 'bout played out."

"Certainly," said Caleb, "I won't need it again

until I get ready for corn. Seth did you ever see such a sight?" pointing over and down the hill, where the apple trees were laden with blossoms. Each tree looked as if a heavy fall of damp snow had settled on it, so full as each was with blossoms. "Looks as if I should have some apples this year, Seth."

"Looks that way, my boy; but blossoms ain't apples. Still it's late for frosts. They ought to turn out well."

"Going down to the post office, Caleb?" Seth inquired later. "If you are, I'll just jog along with you; looks like John Libby's coming down the hill there."

"That's he all right," replied Caleb. "You would know that pair of old plugs anywhere."

John Libby was the driver of the stage that ran between D——, Rushton, Oak Valley, and Brainard's Falls. Rushton was five miles from D——, which was the nearest railroad point, while Oak Valley lay some three miles beyond Rushton; and Brainard's Falls four miles up the river from Oak Valley; Libby had run this stage route for years. It was said that in his younger days he used to

make respectable time between points, but of late years he had, like his horses, been getting slower and slower until he consumed at least an hour and often more coming from D—— to Rushton. Notwithstanding, the villagers knew just what time to expect him, and they were always on the lookout for him, as mail time in Rushton was the event of the day, just as it is the event of the day in any small village which has no railroad connection and must depend upon the stage for mail, newspapers, and any stray bit of gossip from the outside world.

The mail for the three villages was all brought in one bag. Rushton's post mistress took out the mail for that town; then she relocked the bag which was carried on to Oak Valley and from there to Brainard's Falls. The post office was situated in the front room of a story and a half house opposite the general store.

The post mistress, Mrs. Lucinda French, was the widow of a former Grand Army man. She had held the position of post mistress for many years, in fact from the time when the office boasted of but fourteen boxes all told. Rushton had, however, during the past twenty-five years grown

slowly but surely. Now there were thirty-eight boxes to be attended to. Mrs. French, whose tongue, at least so the boys said, was caught in the middle and wagged at both ends, kept so busy at mail time that she had no leisure as in former days to read the various postal cards or to gossip with those who called for their mail. She had, however, acquired the habit of scanning each and every letter which passed through her hands; and she was so familiar with certain superscriptions that she could almost tell the contents.

The mail had now arrived and Caleb and Seth together with the other villagers were waiting for the mail to be distributed. Neither one expected a letter, but each took the daily paper, and it was force of habit remaining until the last letter was distributed before departing for home. So they waited today, while Mrs. Lucinda French took some twenty or twenty-five letters from the bag marked Rushton, and began her usual remarks. "Well, here's a letter for Cynthia McDonald. Gets one every day from her feller down to Manchester. Think they'd get sick of writing by and by. Then, it makes business for the Government.

Here's three for Cyrus Whitney; something 'bout mortgages I guess. He don't get many from the parson," with a chuckle. "Well, I declare! Here's two for Oak Valley. I never seen 'em! My eye-sight's getting poor. Has Libby gone?" Yes, Libby had gone.

"Well, never mind," she continued, "they'll git 'em tomorrow."

Oh, yes! Mrs. Post Mistress; a matter of twenty-four hours doesn't matter in New Hampshire.

Continuing to sort the mails, Mrs. French remarked, "Here's one for Deacon Patch; good fat one; looks as if there might be a check in it," holding it up to the light. "Here's one for Jim Anderson. Lawyer's name in the corner. He gets lots of lawyers' letters. Don't pay his bills. so they say. And I swan here's one for David Abbott; from New York, too! Wonder who can be writing to him. Poor man, he'd never get it. Well I must run over and see Mattie tomorrow. I ain't been over since the funeral."

"I'll take it if you don't mind," said Caleb.

And handing it over to him with a quizzical ex-

pression on her face, the genial post mistress continued her harangue. But Caleb did not wait to hear about the rest of the letters, he hurried for home, wondering as much as Mrs. Lucinda French herself who could have written to his father from New York. He found his mother in the kitchen, and Caleb handed the letter to her, but she said, "You open it, Caleb, and read it to me." So Caleb opened it and read as follows:

New York, May 1, 19—.

David Abbott:

My dear old chum: I do not know that you will ever receive this letter, but I write it in the blind hope that you will. I do not even know if you are still on the farm. But remembering your domestic habits I take it for granted that you are. For some time after leaving Rushton I had the local paper sent me, and in one of them saw the announcement of your marriage to Matilda Standish. Since then I have had no news from Rushton.

But to come down to business. I have a daughter, Marjorie, a young lady of eighteen years, whose health is not of the best. Our family physician advises a complete change of scene, air and diet, and recommends sending her into the country. In thinking of the country naturally my thoughts turned back to my boyhood home, and just as naturally to my old school chum. I

thought that Rushton would be just the place for Marjorie, and my old friend's home just the home for her, provided I can prevail upon you to take my daughter as a boarder.

Now, if you are in a position to do so, and are also willing to receive her I will send you a check each week for eight dollars as long as she may stay with you. I do not wish her at a hotel; but I do want her where she can have good, homelike surroundings, such as I know would prevail in your home. I do not expect nor in fact do I wish you to make any change in your mode of living for her. But, on the contrary, I should prefer that she ate plain country food. She will be but little trouble, as she wishes to take care of her own room, and if she wishes to help about the house in any way I shall not object, as exercise will undoubtedly be a benefit to her. I am aware that eight dollars a week is rather more than is generally charged for board at a country farm house, but I am well able to pay this, or even more if you think it not enough, as I wish her to be comfortable and happy and in good hands. If you receive this letter and answer favorably I shall run on myself with her and stop a day or two for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne."

Truly your old friend,

Sam Upton.

"Sam Upton!" said Mrs. Abbott. "How well I remember him! He and your father were rivals for me. You would hardly think to look at me

now, Caleb, that your father ever had a rival, would you?"

"Now Mother!" answered Caleb, "why not? I am sure for your age you are a handsome woman yet, and I am sure by your earlier pictures that there must have been more than one rival for your hand. But how shall we answer? We don't want to offend an old friend of Father's; still, of course we can't take a boarder."

"And why not?" replied his mother. "Eight dollars a week is a lot of money; nearly twice the usual price of board at a farm house. I am sure there must be quite a profit in it."

"Yes, but look at the extra work for you. Although he says in his letter that he does not expect us to make any difference in our style of living, there would of necessity be some difference."

"Not much," she replied. "He says she wishes to take care of her own room and young ladies of eighteen ain't running around upsetting the house much. I always did the work for three, and I see no reason why I cannot do it again. Then, besides, I get rather lonely myself sometimes when

you are away all day long. She will be company for me."

The last sentence settled the argument. If his mother was lonely,—and she must be sometimes,—and the young lady would be company for her—that put the matter in a new light to Caleb.

He answered, "It is for you to say, Mother, not for me. If you really wish her to come I will write that she may. Of course we must give her the best room, the west chamber," continued Caleb. "I hope she is not too much of an invalid, or a nervous crank, so that we sha'n't regret it. However, we are not obliged to have her stay if it is not pleasant."

"No," said Mrs. Abbott, "but something tells me she is pretty and agreeable; and that we shall like her. You answer the letter, Caleb, and let him make the arrangements when she is to come."

So Caleb sat down and wrote the following:

Rushton, May 7, 19—.

Samuel Upton:

Dear Sir: It falls upon me to answer your letter to my father, David Abbott, as my father lost his life in the Merrimack during the recent

flood of which you have undoubtedly read. My mother, however, is still living at the farm, together with her only child, or rather her only son, myself. Mother remembers you well, and she would be pleased to accept your daughter as a boarder in our home. We were at first adverse to taking anyone into the home, but after reading your letter a second time we came to the conclusion to accept the offer. I hope and trust that we will get along pleasantly together, and you may rest assured that we will do all in our power to make your daughter's stay a pleasure to her. We have few attractions here as you evidently know, and I only hope your daughter will enjoy her surroundings.

If you will kindly let me know when you intend to arrive here I will meet you personally with my team, as a trip in the old stage is slow and tiresome and I think you will ride in more comfort with me.

Very truly yours,

Caleb Abbott.

The banker and his daughter were at breakfast when the morning mail was delivered. The butler brought it at once to Mr. Upton, who ran over the letters, glancing at the post mark on each, and picking out what he thought were personal letters first, leaving business matters and papers for the

last. "Well, daughter," he exclaimed, "here is one post marked 'Rushton.' Rather a quick reply. It must have reached David after all."

Marjorie, watching her father as he read the letter saw his head droop for a moment as he murmured "poor David," and she quickly inquired, "Is it favorable, Papa? Oh, how I hope it is! Somehow I am looking forward to a country life, when at first I so dreaded it."

"Yes," replied her father, "it is favorable. David, my old friend, is dead, but the letter is from his son, a bright lad, too, I should judge from the letter; good writing, well written; he certainly is no greenhorn. But here, you can read it yourself," he added as he handed her the letter, and turned to look through the rest of the mail, while Marjorie read the letter which was to change her whole life.

Would she still have decided to go to Rushton could she have looked into the future? Would she have left the city; the city which is a world in itself; the one city of the country that has life, life

for the rich, life for the poor, attractions for all. Yes, we think she would.

* * * * *

Everyone was busy in Rushton. There was something for all to do. Even the children were busy before and after school. They hardly found time to play. The long winter evenings were over. The store looked deserted these beautiful nights. Farmers were busy, ploughing, harrowing and planting. Farmers' wives were busy from morning till night with their regular work, together with the added spring cares in the kitchen when an extra man or two increase the family; with the house-cleaning and butter-making they found but little time to spend in the flower garden, yet they did resurrect from the cellars where they had lain all winter, geraniums and dahlia bulbs. The hollyhocks and peonies had already been uncovered; and here and there a bunch of tender, green leaves close down to the ground could be seen, ready to push forth and grow till later in the season they would blossom in all their gorgeous colors.

The boys helped to do the chores, together with lending a hand at the wood pile, for the far seeing and thrifty farmer hardly waits for one winter to be over before he begins to fill the shed and yard with wood for the coming winter. Still, the boys managed to find time to go brook trouting. With a fresh cut alder, a line and hooks, and a tin can full of worms, many were the speckled beauties which they lured from their hiding places in deep pool or from under the bank of some small meadow or woodland stream.

Mrs. Abbott was busy with the rest, and her house had been cleaned from cellar to garret. It hardly seemed worth while to spend so much time in cleaning house, when there was so little evidence of the need of cleaning; but Mrs. Abbott was one of those women who clean house thoroughly every spring, even if it did not really need it. Caleb had painted the kitchen walls and ceiling a robin's egg blue, and the wood work white; a pretty combination, while the floor was of oak, in its natural grain. The dining room floor had been repainted. A new straw matting, cheap, but with a small, neat pattern had been laid in the west

chamber. Caleb had whitewashed the ceiling. The walls had been repapered by Mrs. Abbott herself, and the best lace curtains were draped at the windows. On one side stood the great four-posted bedstead with its feather beds and quilts, and snow white sheets and pillow slips. The pillows had been made by Mrs. Abbott with feathers from her own fowl. In one corner stood a large, old fashioned bureau and glass. There were chairs together with a great comfortable rocker and washstand, a picture here and there brightened the walls. It was indeed a typical country chamber, a chamber which is full of rest and comfort, with fresh air, sunshine, and pleasant views from the windows.

Caleb was up bright and early to do all he could before noon. Today he was to meet Mr. Upton and Marjorie, his daughter. He had borrowed a pole and set of light double harnesses, not being able to afford such a luxury himself; and the family democrat had been washed and oiled; quite an event for a country team. Caleb laughingly told his mother that he had almost forgotten what the color of the democrat really was, until he had

gotten the spring mud off of it. The horses shone like satin. Their winter coats were shed, and Caleb who always found time to curry and brush his favorites, Jack and Gill, had groomed them into fine condition. Caleb himself, a picture of health and strength, freshly shaven and in his best clothes, was ready to start. "Don't get nervous, mother," he said, as he was about to drive away. "And have dinner ready at two. If the train is on time I'll be back in an hour and a half."

Mrs. Abbott gazed after him for a moment with hearty pride in the general appearance of the horses, carriage and driver, her own dear boy! Then she hastened into the house, for there was work to be done before dinner; the chickens were to be roasted, vegetables to be prepared and the many little odds and ends to be done that only the housekeeper knows how to do, or how much time it takes to do them.

Caleb had allowed ample time for the trip. He let his horses take their own time and, whistling as he rode along, enjoyed to the uttermost this rare holiday, finally arriving at the station a few minutes before train time.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MAKING NEW FRIENDSHIPS.

The summer season had not yet opened in New Hampshire, and Caleb felt that he would have little difficulty in finding Mr. Upton and daughter, knowing there would be few if any strangers to alight at D——. So when a portly man with a well fed appearance and a young lady by his side came toward him he raised his hat and said: "Mr. Upton?"

With a smile and nod the other replied:

"Yes; Mr. Abbott I presume?" and receiving a reply in the affirmative, added, "my daughter, Marjorie, Mr. Abbott," and Caleb, acknowledging the introduction, remarked that this was a glorious day.

"Yes, it is," replied Mr. Upton. "It has been a fine spring so far."

"Have you any trunks?" asked Caleb. "If so,

you had better let me give the checks to Libby, the stage driver."

"Oh, yes," replied Mr. Upton with a laugh, "Marjorie has trunks. You know no young lady can travel without trunks, although what she expects to do with all the duds she brought here, I can't see."

"Why, father! I haven't brought anything but what I need. It's true I have brought some reception dresses, but even if I don't wear them here they will be just as well here as in New York."

Caleb was little prepared for the vision of loveliness when he saw Marjorie Upton. He had pictured her as an invalid, nervous, and perhaps cranky or pettish. Marjorie, it is true, was pale, yet her paleness only set off her style of beauty. Large, dark eyes; violet, Caleb thought, though he was not quite sure. Hair of a rich golden color; full red lips; a small, well shaped nose, a little too small he thought, and then again he wasn't quite sure but that it was just large enough. It was when she smiled that her beauty was most bewitching. Tall and supple, she carried herself with an exquisite grace. Caleb thought he had never

gazed on so beautiful a creature, and he found himself comparing her beauty with that of another,—Hilda. Hilda, the perfect picture of health, with graceful form, though stout in build; dark olive skin; hazel eyes; auburn hair; rosy cheeks; what a contrast these two made! Both were beautiful girls; yet such different types of beauty. And Marjorie in turn thought she had never seen before such a perfect type of man as Caleb. Tall, broad shouldered, deep chested; she looked with wonder at Caleb while he lifted easily and alone one of her large, heavy trunks high up on another behind the stage. It seemed no effort at all on his part. Yet when it left their home in New York it took two men to handle it.

"If you don't mind, Papa, I am going to banish you to the rear seat," said Marjorie when they were ready to start. "I want Mr. Abbott to tell me about any interesting place we pass. That is, if I won't tire you with my questions," she added to Caleb, with one of her sweetest smiles.

"Not at all," replied Caleb. "It will give me pleasure to tell you of anything that may interest you. But I am afraid that there won't be much of

interest on this drive. There are, however, many beautiful drives about Rushton."

"I am afraid my daughter won't drive much," said Mr. Abbott. "The doctor recommends exercise, and if she doesn't care to walk, I wish her to ride horse-back. Before I go back I hope to make arrangements with you to care for a saddler for her. That is, if you don't object to the care of another horse."

"Certainly not," replied Caleb. "I have plenty of stall room, and one more horse won't take much of my time."

"Oh! Mr. Abbott, what is that bird I hear?" exclaimed Marjorie excitedly. "See! there he is way up the tip top of that tree! Stop a moment, please, while I hear him sing."

"That?" said Caleb. "I thought everybody, even a New Yorker, was familiar with that bird. That is a robin-red-breast. I am surprised to hear him singing now. It is early in the morning or at dusk that robins usually sing. You will hear them tonight from half a dozen tree tops."

"Oh! papa, isn't he sweet?" Who that has heard our robin-red-breast singing at sunset but

what will agree with Marjorie that it certainly is sweet music! So with almost childish enthusiasm Marjorie kept Caleb busy answering questions, describing the surrounding country, telling her names of birds, pointing out different farms and drives until finally they drove up to Mrs. Abbott's door.

When the stage drove up to the post office with three large trunks strapped on behind, and no passenger with them, there was much speculation as to what it could mean. Mrs. Lucinda French was so frustrated that she could hardly open the mail bag. When she did finally get around to distributing the mail she was so rattled that she gave Cynthia McDonald a letter of Jim Anderson's with a bill in it, and to Jim a love letter of Cynthia's from her beau down in Manchester. Mrs. French knew nothing about the new boarder at the Abbott's. She had called, as she had intended, on Mattie; but all she could find out about that letter from New York was that it was from an old friend of David's. Beat around the bush as she would, she could find out nothing further in regard to its contents. Mrs. Abbott with a smile simply said,

"Just a friendly letter," and "how is your garden doing this year, Lucinda?" As Caleb himself had confided in no one about a boarder coming to their house nothing was known of it in the village. So when, in answer to a dozen inquiries, Libby said, "Going up to Abbott's. Young lady gone on ahead with Caleb," and in his dry way added, "Shouldn't wonder if they intended getting hitched."

Hilda, who had run down to the office for her father's mail, arrived just in time to hear these remarks. A dull pain seized her around her heart; for a moment she felt dizzy. Was it possible that Caleb was to get married and she had heard nothing of it? But no, she never heard much village gossip. Yet it could not be. There must be some mistake. Still, she distinctly heard Libby say so. She would have liked to know more, but she was too well bred to ask anyone. Taking her mail she started across the fields for home, not much like the light hearted girl who had come over these same paths a few moments before.

A partridge nesting in the edge of the wood rose with a whir-u-u-u and for a moment startled

Hilda from her thoughts, then as she continued on her way, her thoughts went back to the old school days. Somehow Caleb always seemed to belong to her and she to him. They were always together, romping, laughing, with not a thought or care for the future. But of late they had been drifting more and more apart, until now they saw very little of each other; in fact they never met now except by chance. It seemed to Hilda as she thought over the past few months as if Caleb had tried to avoid her lately. He never attended the little entertainments which were occasionally given in the village, and for the last few Sundays he even had not been to church. (Hilda did not know that Caleb felt he could not afford to go to entertainments and that his Sunday clothes were getting shabby.) Why was it? Had she done anything to offend him? Had she been forward in still calling him "Caleb?" She could never call Caleb, her old school play-fellow, "Mr. Abbott." When does childhood leave off and womanhood begin, anyway? When shall we cease calling each other those sweet school day names and begin the titles of society?

Ah, Hilda! it is hard to define the time to leave the old free, happy ways, the old pleasant names, the romps and laughter, to put on the serious manners of man and woman. Yet time and society demand it. Now that the school days are over, and you and Caleb, like many others, are entering that future of toil and hardship, care and responsibility, worldliness and deceit, you, too, must join the multitude, and lay aside your joyous heartedness; your innocent pleasures, to enter with others into that world of duty and sacrifice. If your heart aches for the old days, for the old love, you must hide it from all. You are a young woman now.

Mrs. Abbott and Mr. Upton greeted each other cordially, and Mr. Upton presenting Marjorie with, "This is my daughter, Mrs. Abbott. Will you take good care of her?"

Mrs. Abbott took both her hands in hers and drew her toward her, kissing her for an answer. A tear stole softly down Marjorie's pale cheek. It seemed almost like a home-coming, and yet she was leaving her own home and her father, whom

she loved so well, to come amongst entire strangers.

"Perhaps you wish to go to your room at once? It is a long, dusty journey; you must be tired," said Mrs. Abbott. "And you, Mr. Upton, you can step into Caleb's room and remove the travel stains. I will show you upstairs, Miss Marjorie." Laughingly she added, "We have no elevator here."

"No," replied Mr. Upton, "and I am glad Marjorie is leaving them behind. I honestly think that all the matter with her health is want of exercise. Elevators to take her upstairs and downstairs; a carriage at the door; servants to attend her every want. I hope, Mrs. Abbott, that you won't allow her to get indolent, but let her attend to her own wants. It is my wish that she will learn to help herself. I am sorry to say that I have humored her in almost everything. I hope whatever her faults are you will overlook them. I really do not think Marjorie lazy. But after so many years of idleness she may need waking up."

"Never fear," said Mrs. Abbott in reply, "there

will be enough for her to do without over exerting herself."

"Yes, Papa," said Marjorie, "I intend to care for my own room, help to feed the chickens, learn to make butter, and to cook, too, if Mrs. Abbott will teach me."

"I am afraid your grocery bill will be something enormous, Mrs. Abbott, if you allow her to cook. She has a pocketful of rules for cake which she showed me. Why! not one calls for less than a dozen eggs and three cups of butter, to say nothing of sugar and other ingredients," laughingly went on Mr. Upton.

"Now, Papa, aren't you absurd!" replied Marjorie with spirit. "Those recipes are from the latest cooking school, and if you think I am going to ruin Mrs. Abbott on account of their grocery bills, you just see the grocer before you go home and start an account in my name, because I am going to learn to cook, if I use all the eggs and butter in Rushton."

"That's right, dear, I haven't heard you speak with such spirit for years. You shall have the account and cook all you want to. But," added

her father, "we are keeping Mrs. Abbott. She is waiting to show you to your room." So they proceeded upstairs, Mrs. Abbott showing Marjorie her room first.

"Oh, Papa! isn't it nice?" exclaimed Marjorie, enthusiastically. "So large and square, such sweet paper, and see how the sun shines in those two windows!" pointing to the windows on the west side. It was now nearly two o'clock, and the sunlight came streaming in.

"Oh, Papa, look at this view from the window! There are hills banked upon hills as far as you can see, and there's a cottage nestling amongst the trees, and cows and sheep too! Oh, I shall never tire looking from these windows!"

"It is indeed a fine, sunny room. I am glad you are pleased with it," replied her father. "Now, Mrs. Abbott, where do I go?"

"Right in here," replied the hostess, showing him Caleb's room. "You stop here tonight, Mr. Upton."

"Oh, no!" he replied. "I won't put you to so much trouble. I intend to go to the hotel tonight."

"The hotel!" she answered. "Do you remember the hotel? Well, it hasn't changed a bit. I rather think you will be more comfortable here."

Mr. Upton's thoughts wandered back to the boyhood days when the butcher-cart used to come down the street, and the boys would chase it, singing out, "Here comes old Skinner with his leather cart, old boots! old boots!" You know what that means, if you have ever lived in the country. The butcher in these small villages used to kill a "critter" on Sunday and come around with the meat to sell on Monday. Some poor, old, skinny cow, too old to eat, and so she must be eaten. Meat so tough that you could hardly stick a fork in the gravy. Then, in the winter season, when the hotel was full of boarders, mostly wood choppers (big, hearty men), Hodgsdon, the fish man, would come along. Mrs. Kettchum, leaning out the window would sing out, "Got any oysters, Hiram?"

"Yes'm, good ones," Hiram would reply.

"Well, bring me in a pint." He thought of the old, front room which was used for an office, with its big wood stove which sat in the centre, and an

old second-hand barber chair in one corner. The barber was never there if you wanted a shave. One must go and find him down in the meadow, where he had gone fishing. In another corner was an old weather-beaten table around which usually sat four or five "regulars," playing pitch, or forty-fives. Along one side was the counter with Kettchum himself leaning far over it, his fat, greasy face wreathed in smiles, while from his lips issued clouds of smoke from a rank "two fer,"—one of his own. Back of the counter, and a little to the rear, was a suspicious looking closet such as all hotels claim in prohibition New Hampshire.*

Looking at the clean, white walls and the snow white sheets in Mrs. Abbott's hospitable house, Mr. Upton recanted. "Thank you very much for your kind offer. I think I will intrude on your hospitality for tonight."

Caleb had in the meantime returned from the barn; the trunks had arrived on the stage. With appetites whetted by the long drive, they sat down to a delectable dinner, and each did justice to it,

*At the time of writing this story New Hampshire was a prohibition state. It is now a licensed state.—*Author.*

too. Such stories as Mr. Upton had to tell of the old days in Rushton! Mrs. Abbott joined in, reminding him of this or that event long forgotten, —a husking bee, or a sugaring off, each in turn, until all felt in a joyous mood.

After dinner while they were sitting on the piazza Mr. Upton asked Caleb, "Do you smoke, Mr. Abbott?" taking out a cigar case filled with fine Havanas.

"Yes," replied Caleb, "occasionally. But I can't say I enjoy Kettchum's cigars, and as I can hardly afford good ones I seldom smoke."

"Well, I guess you will find these rather better than Kettchum's. I have smoked them for years. Although I switch off now and then to another brand of imported goods I invariably come back to the Henry Clay."

Thus, between the pleasant whiffs, Mr. Upton and Caleb talked over the coming outlook for Rushton. "Do you know," Mr. Upton said, "that Rushton has changed very little in the past thirty years; with the exception of the pulp mill and the few tenement houses which the company has erected, I can really see no change at all. Yet I

think Rushton could be made into a thriving village, if you could get an electric line in from D—— to connect with R——, going through here to Oak Valley and Brainard's Falls. Then some new industry ought to be exploited to bring people here; a woolen mill, shoe factory, or something of the kind, that would start things going. Some far-seeing young man is needed here; one who is ready to see opportunities as they come along and make the most of them. He added laughingly, "You and I could make the old town wake up."

"Yes," replied Caleb. "But in the first place, an electric line is out of the question. The X, Y & Z line doesn't allow electric roads in this state. The only way to get a road through here is to get a bill through the Legislature, which would force them to build a line themselves. I really think they will some day; even now there is quite a lot of freight that has to be teamed for miles to the nearest transportation point. There is one thing which is lying around here loose that no one has paid any attention to up to the present time; that is granite. It is something that I am entirely

ignorant about, but it seems to me as if a quarry could be started here that would pay. I am going to look it up some day."

Thus the afternoon passed all too quickly. Supper time came, followed by a pleasant evening, then they retired to sleep; the sleep that only those in the country know how to enjoy, that perfect quiet of unbroken slumber which knows no disturbance unless it be the notes of the whip-poor-will across the river. In the morning Mr. Upton reluctantly took his departure for home. Marjorie, brave girl that she tried to be, nearly broke down when she bade her father farewell at the depot. The parting over, however, with Caleb on the drive back to Rushton somehow her spirits returned and she seemed happy and contented.

Caleb was again busy all day long, and every day. Long days they were, too, getting up at five, that he might accomplish the chores and milking before breakfast, then off he went again at seven with his team to work all day, except for the hurried hour at noon. The evening chores followed even before supper. Thus it was often long past eight o'clock at night before Caleb could sit

down for a chat with his mother and Marjorie. He hardly knew what it was to feel tired bodily, yet even now he was looking forward with longing hopes for the time when he could lay aside such drudgery and have employment more congenial to his nature. His father never intended that he should be a farmer. He knew from experience that while the life of a farmer was to a certain extent a free life, still it was continuous work from morning till night, and hard work, with but small returns in comparison with the labor itself. David Abbott had bright hopes for Caleb. It had been his intention to educate him for the bar, and had the father lived, the son probably would never have realized the sacrifices he would have made for him. Now all was changed, and he had his own mark to make. Life looked serious, indeed. Still Caleb was determined more than ever to succeed, although having to earn his own way, success now seemed a long distance ahead. He had noticed some advertisements lately of a course of law studies at home. He was anxious to begin the study of law, but having but little time at present he felt obliged to wait until the coming winter,

when the evenings would be much longer and there would be fewer hours to work.

Caleb came in one night a little out of sorts; somehow everything had gone wrong throughout the day. Throwing himself into the great arm-chair he sat moodily gazing into space.

"What's the matter, my boy?" kindly asked his mother, who, with a mother's quick intuition saw that there was something wrong. "Are you tired?"

"No, mother, not tired. I never get tired, just a little weary and cross; that's all," he replied. "This has been an off day, I guess. To begin with, the first thing this morning Stella kicked over the milk, Jack stepped on my foot, and then Gill threw a shoe, so I lost an hour getting him shod. Then, when I got home the cows were out of the pasture, and I had to chase them for an hour. To cap the climax, I forgot to order grain, and the horses won't have any for breakfast."

"Why, Caleb," replied his mother, with a smile, "you have had your share of troubles for today. But as to the grain, I don't think I would worry any about that. I am sure they get feed enough

even if they do go without grain just once. You have plenty of hay. Some horses never get any grain at all. Do you remember the story your father used to tell about Anderson's horse? How he never got any grain, until one day Jim found a bag of oats by the roadside, and took them home. The poor old horse did not have strength enough to eat them, so Jim got his boy to blow them into him with a bean blower; and then he had to put a blanket over him so they wouldn't come out between his ribs."

Caleb had to laugh when he recalled the story, and saw the old horse rise before his vision. The boys used to call him a hat-rack, so tall and bony was he. Besides being spavined, cockle-jointed, knockkneed and long-haired, he was a cribber and had the spring halt. One of the neighbors said he also had a Canadian door knob, though what that was, Caleb was still in ignorance. Poor old horse, sacred is his memory! He was twenty-five years old at least when Jim bought him, though Jim had been assured he was eight. (By the way, a horse is never over eight when you are trading.) Jim kept him for three years after that and then

traded him for a choate. Jim was a Yankee for trading. He "swapped even" with Jack Curry. Then he had Jack bring over the choate, and after nailing him up in the hog pen, he told Jack that the horse was down in the pasture. That was true enough, the horse was down there, and he could not get up either. When Curry raved and wanted his choate back Jim grinned and said, "A trade's a trade; there's your hoss; take him along if he won't go himself, get a drag and move him off my land. He's your'n now."

Curry went back without his horse. That night the horse died. Jim had to bury him right there in the pasture and Jim didn't hanker for work, either. As he said, he didn't think he got much the best of the trade. " 'Twas mighty hard diggin' down in that stony pasture, an' it takes a pretty big hole for a hoss of that size." Caleb laughed long and heartily as he compared Anderson's poor, skinny beast with his own horses, big creatures, broad of flank, thick necked and sleek. He told his mother that he thought they would after all live over night without that one feed of grain. Turning to Marjorie, Caleb asked:

"What have you been doing all day, Miss Upton?"

"Oh," smilingly answered Marjorie, "I have been walking all over town. I went down across the meadow, and away over to the hill that you call 'sunset hill.' Then I crossed the long bridge and went through the woods to Maple street, back home again. And do you know I met a young lady about my own age, I should judge, of whom I had to ask the way. She seemed strangely frustrated at first, and I thought by her manner that I should not like her. But then she laughed, and she looked so lovely with her face all smiles that I was completely carried away with her. She said, 'You must be the new boarder at Mrs. Abbott's; are you not? Of course I answered 'yes;' and then somehow we got acquainted, the way girls will. I told her my name and she told me hers, Hilda Whitney. I am going over to see her. I think she is just charming."

"Oh, yes! Everybody likes Hilda," replied Caleb. "She is a great favorite in the village. She is always doing some kind act."

## CHAPTER V.

### FARM LIFE ON ABBOTT HILL.

The spring went. Summer came. Nearly all traces of the great flood had disappeared. Roads had been repaired, bridges rebuilt, and the new dam was fast nearing completion. Caleb had been busy during the pleasant days with his team; rainy days found him cleaning harnesses, oiling the wagons, or doing an odd job or two with hammer and saw, tinkering at the hundred and one little things that keep a thrifty farmer busy. Speaking of farmers it is strange, when you think of it, how two farmers can live such different lives. One of them is busy all the time; he never has a minute to call his own. While the other, and I am sorry to say there are many of this class in the country, never seem to do anything. The latter, it is true, may arise at daylight to go shambling out to the barn, giving the cow a kick to wake her out of a

sound sleep, and milking her because he simply must. That is, if his wife doesn't; because in a great many cases the wife does. He also throws feed into the manger of the old family horse, because the old horse must eat, too. He comes in and eats his breakfast of porkscraps, fried over potatoes and biscuits. Returning to the barn he hitches up the old mare; off he drives to the village, where he spends the remainder of the forenoon at the general store, or post office, sitting on a dry-goods box, his long legs dangling lazily over the sides while he whittles away at an odd piece of stick. A half dozen more of his kind sit about the doorway or on the steps, swapping stories and gossip. A sewing circle never equaled one of these gatherings. Returning home in time for dinner, he growls at his biggest boy because his wife has had to cut wood with which to get dinner, in addition to the other duties which are always many. After dinner he remembers that he must drive over to Ellery Holt's to borrow a plough or a cultivator. It ends in his spending his afternoon there. This man's farm is run out; the few potatoes he has planted need hoeing; his corn has not even been

planted as yet and he guesses it's too late now. Probably he will not even cut all his hay; only just what he thinks he will need to carry him along into another season. Yet this mortal drags out an existence while he envies his thrifty neighbor and wonders how he can afford to repaint his buildings or buy a new two-horse mower.

Caleb belonged to the thrifty class. One never found him at the country store, talking of his neighbors. He had even given up going to the post office since Marjorie came, as she liked to run over for the mail. His crops had been planted. His potatoes had been taken care of, cultivated and hoed. The field was indeed a handsome sight, a solid mass of glossy green, except from every hill a bunch of snow white blossoms with their yellow centres. His vegetables in general were in fine condition. Peas, beans, corn, alike were thrifty, while Marjorie had her own little garden of lettuce, radishes, parsley, and other small vegetables.

Caleb was now in the midst of haying, and was busy every day, cutting with his two-horse buckeye, both for himself and for the neighbors who hired their cutting done. This kind of work paid

even better than teaming. What with the money from Mr. Upton for Marjorie's board, and the keep of her saddle horse, the eggs and butter, and the returns from teaming, Caleb was actually piling up money. Money was his great hope and ambition because he was far-sighted enough to know that while money might be the root of all evil one cannot do anything in this world without a barrel of the root. But hard work was telling on him, although he tried to hide it from his mother. His health was good, but he had worked himself thin. There was no fat to be seen; nothing but bone and muscle. Often when he came home after a hard day's work, his mother would ask him if he were tired and suggest his taking a day off.

"At least go to the picnic at Silver Lake. Everybody in the village is going there."

Caleb answered: "No, Mother, not yet. I must do all the work I can while there is work to be done. It is only for a few years at the most."

And so Caleb kept at it. Summer changed into fall; the most glorious time of the year. The fields and meadows were still green from the early fall rains. The hillsides, covered with maples, birch,

beech, hemlock and pine, assumed manifold colors. The red and gold of the maples blended with the dull browns and purple of the beeches and birch. Clustering among them or forming a background in the rear, were the dark greens of the hemlock or the lighter greens of the pine, the trees which throw out an odor of health-giving strength.

Marjorie hardly knew where the days had gone to, so swiftly had they passed. She was up early every morning. Not that she was "up with the lark." After years of New York life one is not apt to rival the birds. The habit of arising at four o'clock in the morning is left for country people who retire when chickens go to roost. But Marjorie was up early; surely by six in the morning, so as to have breakfast with Mrs. Abbott and Caleb. Later she spent an hour in her room, writing to her father. This was one of her every day duties, a duty of which she never tired. Somehow she always found enough to write about from this new home in the country. After she had worked in her garden, she joined Mrs. Abbott in the kitchen where she was learning to cook. She had by this time become proficient, and many a dainty

dish she prepared with her own hands for Caleb, dainties which hardly belonged to a country bill-of-fare. She had learned Caleb's likes and dislikes, and nothing gave her more pleasure than to surprise him at supper with a pattie or omelet, or some fancy cake. Caleb appreciated these little tokens of friendship.

"I am only afraid," he would remark, "that you will spoil me, or bring on an attack of indigestion from such rich foods." He would laughingly say: "Beans and biscuits, hog and 'taters is our general diet, you know." Then after dinner Marjorie would ride or walk. If she walked she would gather wild flowers for the table and her own room. She discovered the first Mayflowers, the beautiful trailing arbutus, those dainty flowers of pink and white, whose fragrance was so exquisite that it would fill the whole house. Then later cowslips and violets, blood root and anemones found their way into the home. Or she brought home in June great clusters of the pink laurel which covers the hillside all the year round with its beautiful shining green leaves. The later summer flowers, daisies, lilies, red and yellow and

white, each in its special beauty, one by one Marjorie captured them for her own joyous use.

Marjorie had also made a study of birds. She could now tell the song of the robin and cat bird, the linnet and sparrow, or the beautiful notes of the Maryland yellow throat, the golden robin. The weird song of the grosbeak in the evening time lured her out; while the shrill cry of the blue jay, or the notes of the meadow lark meant much to her in her daily walks. Much of this knowledge she obtained from Hilda. They had become fast friends and confidantes, riding or walking together nearly every day. Hilda's father, Cyrus Whitney, had foreclosed a mortgage on a horse which was really a good saddler, and Hilda had little difficulty in gaining permission to use it. She soon rode fully as fearlessly as Marjorie; and many a ride did they take far out into the country.

The evenings were the best hours of the day to Marjorie, when she and Caleb were sitting together on the broad piazza, while Mrs. Abbott was busy with the last household daily duties. Together they would sit chatting, Caleb with his fragrant cigar, and Marjorie with some dainty needle-

work, half listening to the whip-poor-wills and katy-dids. The sunsets were wonderfully beautiful that summer; one night the sky lit up as if with one great fire, another the heavens streaming purple and gold, or perhaps again nothing but the azure blue of the sky itself. Marjorie was unexplainably happy. She often wished in the solitude of her room that life might continue thus forever. There was one thing lacking only to fill her cup of happiness to overflowing, and that was the presence of her dearly beloved father. He had hinted lately in some of his letters to her of retiring from business and buying a country home in or near Rushton, suggesting that he and she should go south or to California for the winters. Marjorie greeted this proposition with rejoicing, but the thought of the winters away from Rushton,—why should she feel lonely at the thought of leaving this little country village? Ah! Marjorie, it is not the thought of leaving Rushton that makes you lonely, there is something else which binds you here; there is some one who holds your heart and you yourself do not yet know it. But the day of awakening is near! and Marjorie, when she knelt

at night by her bedside, with her head bowed in her hands, added another petition to her prayer which had never varied since her mother died, "God bless my father,—and Caleb." Yet she, with a soul as pure and white as the snowy sheets of her bed, knew not herself why she was so happy at Rushton.

Hilda often ran over to the Abbott's in these days. Her father had withdrawn his objection to her calling there since Marjorie had arrived. He had in fact no real reason for refusing to allow Hilda to keep up the old friendship, except his natural stubbornness and the fact that the Abbotts were not wealthy. But now with the addition to their family of a banker's daughter, and that banker reported to be a millionaire, why, that put things in a different light! It would do no harm for Hilda to cultivate such an acquaintance, and perhaps through the daughter he himself could profit; he might be able to place some money at advantage with Mr. Upton. Thus it was that Hilda was a frequent caller at the Abbotts.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THANKSGIVING TIME.

It was nearing Thanksgiving time. Many had been the mysterious confabs between Marjorie and Hilda who planned real gifts for which to be thankful. There came at last a real November day, when the sky was a dull lead color, and the wind whistled about the house. Leaves scurried down the lane, around the corners, then up and down the walk, never stopping for long in any one place, but hurrying here and there as if they were never satisfied to rest until they should finally bring up against some sheltered spot, there at last to find rest in one great heap. The raindrops fell slowly at first, then, as the wind increased they came faster and faster until the whole outside world looked dreary. The wind howled and moaned, driving the rain against the windows until it seemed as if even the windows could not withstand

the onslaught. It was one of those days in the country so suggestive of an open fireplace, apples and cider.

Caleb was at home, and having nothing particular to do, he stayed in the house. The potatoes had been dug and housed long ago. The corn which had stood shocked in the field so many weeks was in the barn and husked. The barn and house were tightened and banked for the winter, the woodshed filled to the roof. Now with a barn so full of hay and fodder that there was scarcely room for the stock, the cellar full of apples to be marketed later when prices were higher, the cellar also crowded with potatoes, cabbages, beets and other winter vegetables, a cask of new cider, and one going to vinegar; a pork barrel filled to the brim and another barrel with beef to corn, the harvest season really seemed to have come to an end. Caleb had fattened and killed a beef. There were no bills to pay, a bank account had been started, and best of all good health reigned in the home.

Caleb sat before the roaring fire, contented. A knock at the door and Caleb jumped up to let the

traveler in, wondering who could be out such a day. In came Hilda, her garments dripping, but with rosy cheeks and laughing eyes.

"I am afraid I shall spoil your nice, clean floor," she remarked to Mrs. Abbott, after greeting her and Caleb.

"Oh, never mind, dear," Mrs. Abbott replied, "it will wash, you know."

"But what a storm!" exclaimed Caleb. "How did you dare to venture out today?"

"Oh!" replied Hilda with a laugh, "I simply could not stay at home. Besides Marjorie and I have lots of business to talk over, and we need your assistance, too, Caleb. Because it's such a stormy day I thought perhaps you might be at home. You are such a busy man nowadays, you know, that you can't find time to talk to old friends, so old friends have to beard the lion in his den when they wish particularly to see him." While talking Hilda had been taking off her wraps and changing her rubber boots for a pair of slippers. She had followed Caleb into the great front room.

"So I am to be bothered with you two girls, am

I?" said Caleb, as soon as they were all seated. "Well!" with a sigh, "I am going to make the best of it, and I guess I won't have a very hard time, either. Now what is the business so important that you need my help?"

"Oh, not much!" answered Hilda. "Marjorie and I are going to make up several baskets for Thanksgiving. In the first place we want to know how many poor families there are in Rushton, and who they are."

"We don't wish to leave out anyone; neither do we wish to offend anyone who will feel above accepting so-called charity," said Marjorie.

"Well, let's see," said Caleb, "there are not many in Rushton who really need help. There's Anderson's family; they would be glad to receive a basket. Then there's Ed Holt's folks; and the McCarthy family on the west side. Let me see, Jake Merrow's people; they have never been in need of help in the past, but since Jake broke his leg they have had rather a hard time to get along; a turkey there would not go amiss. Then there is the Widow Fleming's. She has got a large family of six children besides herself, and she has to

take in washing. You can put them down. Then, there is the Frenchman that got blown up and lost his eyesight, La Pere I think his name is. Let me think, are there any more? Oh yes, old man Waters; I guess these are all I can think of."

"Seven in all," exclaimed Marjorie, who had been counting on her fingers.

"Then there are the baskets to be delivered," said Hilda. "Can we depend on you to drive us around? It can be after your work is done for the day."

"Oh, yes!" Caleb replied, "nothing would please me better than to drive with you two young ladies even on an errand of mercy. I can help you, too, I am sure, if you will both go with me for company. I might be afraid to go alone after dark, but if you two go I won't need any lantern, your eyes will light up the way."

"Now don't flatter us like that," said Marjorie. "It sounds too much like New York, and I prefer Rushton."

"Oh, yes! we will both go," said Hilda, "and you won't need our eyes for lanterns, because if pleasant there will be almost a full moon."

"Is there really to be a moon?" asked Marjorie. "I hope it will be pleasant, and if we can only have snow enough for sleighing, won't the ride be grand!"

"Well, now that part of the program is settled," remarked Hilda, "where do we buv the turkeys? We want nice ones, and one or two extra large ones to give to the ones with the largest families."

"I guess I can supply seven turkeys; so that you won't have to buy any at all, that is if mother is willing. You know we are partners, and she has the say about the feathered stock. There was an agent here the other day who made mother an offer for the lot."

"Oh, no! Mr. Abbott, we certainly don't expect you to give away your turkeys; we intend to buy them," said Marjorie.

"And why not?" answered Caleb. "You can give the fruit, vegetables and groceries, I, the turkeys. Isn't that fair, Hilda?" he asked. And Hilda replied:

"I think this is not for me to settle. You and Marjorie must decide it yourselves."

"Well," continued Caleb, "I have often thought

I should like to do something of this kind; and now that you and Hilda have started it we will form a company of three. I will supply the turkeys, Miss Upton."

Hilda found herself comparing these sentiments with those of her father. "No, I won't give any turkeys to anyone!" he had answered her when Hilda broached the subject to him. "Let 'em raise turkeys or eat salt fish. If you are fool enough to spend your pocket money for turkeys for some lazy good-for-nothing loafer, go ahead, but don't ask me. My money comes too hard to give away." He, the richest man in Rushton; the other earning his daily bread by the sweat of his brow. Involuntarily Hilda's thoughts wandered back to last spring when the town talk was of Caleb and his daring rescue at the flood. What a big heart he had! Oh, if that heart was only hers!

These preliminaries having been settled satisfactorily, Hilda and Marjorie talked of what else the baskets should contain, with now and then a suggestion from Mrs. Abbott, who had come in to announce that dinner was ready.

"Of course you will stop to dinner, Hilda," an

invitation which Hilda gladly accepted. At dinner Caleb spoke to his mother about the turkeys.

"Why, Caleb!" she said with a laugh, "as if you had to ask me about those turkeys. I have already promised one to the parson, and we shall have the big gobbler for ourselves. The rest you may do with as you see fit."

The dinner party was a merry one and the talk was of Thanksgiving. They were very enthusiastic regarding their plans to help such poor deserving families who could not afford the luxury of a turkey dinner without which Thanksgiving day is indeed almost a mockery.

During the afternoon the weather suddenly changed, as it often does in New England. When Hilda started for home it was cold and freezing, with now and then a feathery flake of snow, a warning of the winter so soon to come. Caleb, who with Marjorie was bidding Hilda adieu at the door, remarked:

"It looks now as if winter would set in early. You may get your sleigh-ride on Thanksgiving after all."

"Oh! how I hope we shall," exclaimed Marjorie.

"I am looking forward so to a sleigh ride in the country! It must be fascinating to spin along these roads. The beautiful snow around us everywhere, with no electric plows to throw it up in heaps, and no salt to make bare places everywhere."

"Yes," answered Caleb, "to one who has never had a sleigh ride far up in the country, it is indeed an experience. We don't plow the snow off the roads here, but use a great six-horse roller to roll it down. Every fall of snow during the winter is rolled until it is almost as hard as ice. You will see no grimy, mealy mixture called snow here, but the real article in all its glory."

"Yes," said Hilda, "although the winter is a busy time in the country, there is also much to enjoy. But don't stand there in the cold any longer Marjorie; good bye until tomorrow."

"Good bye," replied Marjorie.

There is nothing which creates so much excitement in a small country village, next to the arrival of a new parson, as the advent of a new doctor; such an event had just happened in Rushton. Dr. John Sherman had dropped into town from no one

knew just where. He had at first stopped at the hotel, but finding that hardly satisfactory, he had decided to leave the hotel, and started forth to find a more congenial boarding place. At the outset he met with difficulty. The villagers looked upon Dr. Sherman with more or less suspicion, some of the old settlers even avoiding him, as if he were here for questionable purposes, or to sell them a gold brick—same as Deacon Foss over in Weed Village bought a year ago. However, he at last found a home with the very people he most enjoyed. Old Dr. Higgins had been the village physician for thirty-five years. He had never had a medical rival in town, because there was not enough practice in Rushton for two physicians.

For thirty-five years he had had a monopoly of the local patients, young and old. Being a man of simple tastes, together with having as a helpmate a frugal wife, he had laid away quite a little money. But now he was getting old; rheumatism was troubling him and although he had tried his own skill upon himself, together with many patent medicines and plasters, he had as yet found no relief. He did not so much mind making his daily

rounds,—he felt it his duty to call on all old patients, as he had done for years,—but he looked upon the increase of new patients almost as an affliction and he decidedly hated to get out of bed for a drive at midnight of five or six miles to an outlying village. He had almost decided to give up his practice altogether and let some younger man attend to it. Still he had patients who thought no one like their own doctor and who, like other patients, with other family physicians, would have no one else while he lived. Many times Dr. Higgins had thought that if he could only find some young man willing to locate here who would take charge of all the new practice and also of what old practice he could relinquish, then he himself might go to bed at night and rest without being disturbed. So it was when Dr. Sherman drifted into town, fresh from hospital work and possessing a proper diploma with a letter of introduction to Dr. Higgins, the old doctor was really glad to see him. He was even more glad when the new doctor told him that he thought of locating somewhere in the vicinity and thought well of Rushton, adding, however, that he did not want to

conflict with Dr. Higgins in any way. He asked Dr. Higgins to advise him where best to locate in order to build up a practice. Dr. Higgins took him into his library, and after a long talk became quite attracted to him and was quite surprised at the knowledge the young man had already stored away in his mind. He expressed wonder at the advance science had made of late years, and was an interested listener to details about the X-rays, the baking process, and removals of entire stomachs, the marvels of anti-toxine—all these discoveries had taken place since his college days, and although he had read about them somewhat in medical reports it had never been his fortune to meet with a doctor before who had had experience with their use. Dr. Sherman being familiar with many of these cases through his hospital experience was happy in explaining fully to the good old doctor the modern processes, who was quite carried away with the new point of view. And when as a final remark Dr. Sherman told him that besides, a cure for consumption would soon be found, together with the fact that a cure for rheumatism had been discovered, which he himself was inter-

ested in, the old doctor jumped up straight out of his chair. He immediately sat down again, however, as a twinge shot through his limbs. Grasping the hand of Dr. Sherman he exclaimed:

"My boy, if you can cure my rheumatism you shall have the whole of my practice and all I can get you besides."

A week or so later Dr. Sherman again called upon Dr. Higgins and told him about his trials at the hotel and his vain search to find a suitable boarding house.

The good old doctor in his blunt way exclaimed:

"Good enough! so you can't find a place you like? Well, come here: that is, if you can put up with two old fogies like Betsie and me. Then you will be right at home and when some one comes banging at the door in the middle of the night for old Doctor Higgins, why! young Doctor Sherman can go. Perhaps, in the morning, just for old friendship's sake, I'll drive over to see whether it's a boy or girl."

The new doctor was soon settled with a brand new shingle over the Doctor's old one, for Dr.

Higgins had insisted that the new sign be on top.

Two days before Thanksgiving day, Caleb, coming in to supper, remarked to his mother:

"I guess the girls will have their sleigh ride all right." And Marjorie, who had been busy in the front room, hearing him, came running out to the kitchen, exclaiming:

"Oh! do you think so, Mr. Abbott? Let me take your lantern; I want to see for myself." Taking the lantern from Caleb's hand she went out into the cold night. The temperature seemed right for snow. Not a star was visible. You could even smell the snow in the air. And Marjorie, looking up toward the heavens, felt on her fair face the soft, feathery flakes already beginning to fall. Returning to the house, with joy written on her face, Marjorie said to Caleb:

"It is already snowing. Won't it be beautiful! Do you think it will turn to rain?" her face falling, as she thought of such a misfortune happening.

"No, I think we are in for a genuine, old fashioned snow," Caleb answered. "The indications are that way surely, even the wind is in the right quarter for it."

The day before Thanksgiving dawned bright and fair. The air was sharp and cold. The snow storm of the day before had continued all night. Upon arising Marjorie's first thought was of the sleigh ride. Not waiting to dress she hastened to the window and looked out with joy upon as fair a scene as is possible to behold on a winter day. The sun had just risen and the view as far as eye could see was one of dazzling whiteness. The trees were bent far down toward the ground with the weight of snow piled upon them. Here and there she recognized a cottage almost buried in drifts; again some fence top peeped into view. One forlorn blue jay perched upon the top of a nearby beech, wondering probably where his next meal was to come from. Even as Marjorie stood there she could hear the distant jingle of sleigh bells, for already the farmer was up and out upon his early duties. Hastily dressing she ran downstairs. Meeting Caleb just returning from the barn, with a face wreathed in smiles she exclaimed:

"Well, Mr. Abbott, we are to have our sleigh ride, aren't we?"

"Oh, yes!" he replied, "and I am very glad for

your sake. You would have been so disappointed had it been bare ground, or a disagreeable night."

"Indeed I should!" replied Marjorie. "And I shall count the hours until evening. Will you have room for all the baskets? You know they are large ones."

"Oh, yes, there'll be plenty of room. I shall take the large milk-pung and both horses, plenty of straw, and the fur robes. We shall keep comfortable, I am sure."

"Yes, I think we ought to with all those comforts. Then we each have our furs, too; and you your great fur coat." Turning to Mrs. Abbott, "Can I help you any?"

"No, I guess I sha'n't need your help today," answered Mrs. Abbott. "My cooking, with the exception of the vegetables and turkey, is nearly all done. The turkey you know is always Grandma's task."

"Caleb," Mrs. Abbott said, "I want you to look into the pantry and see what we have been doing the past two days." She threw open the pantry door and there, spread upon the shelves, was a sight fit for a king. Great snowy loaves of bread,

apple pies, pumpkin pies, mince pies, such as only a real mother can make. Dainties of all kinds, and the great gobbler, ready for the stuffing. In fact everything in the eatable line which goes to make Thanksgiving day the hospitable day it is.

"Well," said Caleb, "it looks as if we should have enough to eat for a few days at least."

"I guess so," answered Mrs. Abbott. "But come now, breakfast is ready."

Hilda came over after breakfast, and amid much fun and laughter she and Marjorie and Caleb packed the baskets which were to bring joy into so many households. Each was a new bushel basket, containing all that was necessary for a Thanksgiving dinner. Several loaves of bread, a turkey of course, cranberries, vegetables, sugar, tea, coffee, spices, fruits and nuts for the children. Each basket was filled to overflowing.

When evening came the moon rose in all its glory. The horses were hitched to the big milk pung, the baskets packed away in order. Caleb with his great fur coat buttoned closely stood ready to tuck in the robes around the girls. The door opened and Mrs. Abbott stood behind them

holding a light above their heads. What a vision of loveliness! Both girls were warmly clad in furs, Marjorie in a sealskin coat, hat and gloves, while Hilda wore simpler yet becoming furs. Now they are seated. The horses, already impatient in the cold night air, are off almost before they get the word, going at a fine gait, the bells jingling musically. Three comrades happy in the glow of youth!

The first stop was at the Andersons'. For a wonder Jim himself was at home, and sober, too. There had been a rumor around the village lately that Jim was doing better than he used to. They were greatly surprised that a sleigh should stop at their door, and when Caleb called Jim out to help him in with the basket their joy knew no bounds. Next they went to Jake Merrow's. Hilda apologized for leaving them a basket, but intimated that knowing of Mr. Merrow's misfortune she thought perhaps a basket would be acceptable.

"It certainly is," answered Mrs. Merrow. "We have had rather a hard time of it this fall."

Then to the old man, Farmer Waters', they

drove, whose last words were, "Guess I'll have enough to eat all winter, by the looks!"

On again to Eben Holt's, and the McCarthys', both of whom were gladly surprised at the gifts, and who had many thanks and kind words for their goodness. They stopped at the Frenchman's. In his broken English he said:

"You so good,—I thank you so very much, we eat him—we think of you."

The next and last plâce to be visited was the Widow Fleming's. Her house was located two miles from the nearest neighbor, a long drive from the village. Caleb, alighting, knocked at the door, which was opened by Dr. Sherman. Caleb had met the doctor before, liking him at once. He was surprised to see him here, not knowing that there was sickness in the family.

"Is the Widow Fleming at home?" asked Caleb.

"Hush!" replied the doctor, "Mary Fleming is very ill and has just gone to sleep. I hope, if she is not disturbed, that she will be better when she awakes. But you have company, Mr. Abbott," he added, as he noticed the two young ladies in the pung. "Ask them to come in and warm them-

selves. You can hitch the horses for a few minutes."

"Won't they disturb your patient?" asked Caleb. "We have been out some time;" and he added: "Perhaps they had better come in before we start for home."

"Oh, no!" replied the doctor, "if they come in quietly she will not hear them."

So Caleb secured and blanketed the horses, while Hilda and Marjorie went softly into the house. Hilda had already met the doctor, so turning to Marjorie she said:

"This is my very dear friend Miss Upton, Doctor Sherman."

By this time Caleb had returned, bringing the basket in with him. Mrs. Fleming herself had also joined the party that was already gathered around the kitchen stove.

"I am so sorry you have sickness again in your family, Mrs. Fleming," said Hilda. "You have rather more than your share of trouble."

"Yes, indade I do!" answered the widow. "What wid the loss of me poor Mike, and wid Pat breaking his arm, and now me darlint Mary down

wid the fever, it seems as if the gude Lord hisself has forgit me. Thin wid seven mouths to feed and little work a comin' in, and the winter a comin' on, sure I don't know what'll becum of us. Lord knows I hate to do it, but I'm thinkin' the town'll have to take us over the hill." Noticing the basket she continued, "And what is that, Miss Hilda? Is it work you have brought? God bless you, I'll try to do it. But wid me Mary so sick you'll have to wait a day or two."

"No," answered Hilda. "it is not work, but something for Thanksgiving. You know tomorrow is Thanksgiving day."

"God bless you, no! I ain't a thinkin' anything 'bout Thanksgiving, one day is jest the same as another wid me. But I'll put the things away while I talk. My! look at the turkey! Ain't he handsome! It's a long time sinc't I had me old teeth in a turkey. An' bread, an' apples, an' sugar an' tay—real tay. Och! How foine it smells! and coffee, too! Oh, Miss Hilda, I could jest sit down and smell of 'em all night, and holler, if me Mary warn't so sick, poor gal!" And so the widow unpacked every article, fondly handling some,

smelling of others, with now and then a snivel and a wipe across the face with the sleeve of her wrapper, which told only how well she appreciated their thoughtfulness.

"But," said Hilda, "you are thanking me for all these things. I did not bring all myself. It was Miss Upton's idea in the first place, and Mr. Abbott gave the turkey. This is Miss Upton, Mrs. Fleming," turning to Marjorie.

"Och, God bless you all! We'll have plenty to ate and when me Mary wakes up, the seeing of all them good things will make her well. She ain't very strong, Miss Hilda, an' she ain't bin overfed; no more the rist of us, either."

"You spoke of work, Mrs. Fleming," said Marjorie sweetly. "I can give you work if you want it, and I will drive over with it soon, and also to see how your daughter is getting along."

"Oh! will ye? Thank ye, thank ye, you're all so good. Perhaps the good Lord ain't forgit me yet," with another snivel.

"Is Mary very sick, Doctor Sherman?" asked Marjorie.

"She has been, but I think the crisis is passed,"

he replied. "But she is very weak. However, I think with sleep and nourishing foods she will gradually get back her strength. I am afraid the Flemings, as Mrs. Fleming has said, have not had enough nourishment for some time past."

"You must let me know, Doctor," said Marjorie with one of her sweetest smiles, "what Mary needs. I will see that she has it."

"Certainly," answered the doctor, "if you wish."

"We must be going now, we have a long drive. It is getting very late," remarked Hilda.

"Where is your team, Doctor?" asked Caleb, "I did not notice it as I came in."

"Oh, I bring my horses right in with me," laughingly answered the doctor. "These are my horses," slapping his limbs with his hands.

"What! You don't mean to say that you walked way over here in this snow, with the roads hardly broken out yet and that you intend to walk back again?"

"That's just what I did, and I shall walk back again. You see I have no horse of my own as yet,

and Doctor Higgins was away with his; I am doing my rounds today on Shank's mare."

"If you can leave soon we shall be glad to wait for you, and give you a ride home."

"I shall be only too glad to accept your kind offer," the doctor replied. "As there is nothing more I can do now I will just leave some directions with Mrs. Fleming and join you in the yard. Going into the next room where Mrs. Fleming sat by the bedside of her sick child, he left the directions and joined the others just as Caleb had unhitched the horses.

Caleb turned to the young ladies with:

"Come, I will help you in," but Hilda had sprung lightly into the pung and was already seated.

Marjorie exclaimed, "Why, Hilda! you are not on the right seat. But Hilda with a laugh replied:

"I did make a mistake, didn't I? But I shall have to make the best of it now. Caleb must tuck me in, and you will have to entertain Doctor Sherman."

Marjorie and the doctor thus had the rear seat

and judging by their talk and laughter they entertained themselves most successfully.

Caleb, seated close beside Hilda, was happy indeed. He wondered after he reached home whether Hilda really did make a mistake in getting on the front seat, or whether— But of course it was a mistake, she never would have done it intentionally. Still perplexed Caleb fell asleep, dreaming of Hilda and the happy days at school.

The doctor, when he had bidden them all adieu, thought he had never passed such a short but happy hour as that drive home with the sweetest and prettiest girl by his side it had ever been his fortune to meet.

He determined to see more of Marjorie. He, too, let his fancy run into the future. Perhaps he might strive to win her if it was possible to do so.

## CHAPTER VII.

### RUSHTON GROWS.

The days went by rapidly. Christmas had arrived and Mr. Upton came on from New York to spend the holidays. Marjorie was delighted and had many a long story to tell her father of all that had taken place since he was last in Rushton. To be seated around the open fire these long winter evenings was delightful to all. Mrs. Abbott with her household duties over for the day, her bread kneaded and set to rise for the morrow; Caleb, his chores done, discarding his barn clothes, and exchanging his heavy, ungainly felt and rubbers for slippers; Mr. Upton, with his fragrant Havana; Marjorie as fair as a lily; together they made up a varied but social party. The doctor came frequently, dropping in after his office hours in the evening. He was here tonight and Mr. Upton who had met him for the first time was

favorably impressed with his gentlemanly manners and interesting conversation. Marjorie and Doctor Sherman often met; always of course accidentally, still very frequently. In fact it seemed as if the doctor knew just where she was to be, at certain times. He had called so often at the Widow Fleming's, knowing that Marjorie drove there almost daily with some little delicacy for Mary or work for the widow, that Mrs. Fleming had one more worry added to her many cares and that was the size of the doctor's bill. She had hinted to him that as Mary was on the mend she did not think he need come so often. With good care and the strengthening food she was now getting, thanks to the young ladies, she thought her daughter would soon be well. But the doctor did not take the hint. He had continued calling, until one day he told the widow himself that he would not be needed any more, and so would leave his bill. The poor woman who had been dreading this event so long, took the paper from his hands, anxiously glancing at the bottom of the paper, before she should give him some of her hard earned

money and make promises for other future payments.

"But, Doctor," she tremblingly said, when she could finally muster courage to speak, "you've rayceipted the bill, I can't pay ye all to onct."

"It is all paid, Mrs. Fleming," replied the doctor with a laugh. "Only don't say anything about it to any one. If you should be asked about the new doctor just say that he is awfully smart. You see I am new and need some advertising. As your daughter was one of my first patients I thought I would just receipt this bill. Then again I have passed many pleasant hours in your home." Mrs. Fleming with tears in her eyes, yet not quite comprehending, thanked him again and again. Long after he had gone, she sat wondering how he could have passed many pleasant hours in her humble home, almost devoid of furniture and crowded with squalling, ragged children.

Many were the pleasant and happy times during this winter. The moonlight sleigh rides, skating parties, evening entertainments and best of all the Sundays, when the whole family went to church, Mrs. Abbott, Caleb, and Marjorie and her father.

They were usually joined at the church by Hilda and later by the doctor, if possible. The church itself was one of those ordinary country churches, built rather more for economy than beauty. Small, box-shaped, with the customary steeple, with sheds at the rear, filled on Sundays with all kinds of turnouts and horses. Fat horses, lean horses, old horses and colts, some over-fed, many under-fed, some sleek and handsome, some spavined and bony. In the summer time the stylish turnout of the Van Coulters' with their bang tailed horses and negro coachman, stood side by side with the patched up rig and rope-trimmed harness of Steve Sheldon.

The parson of the village church was not a remarkable parson. If he had been he probably would not have been located in Rushton, where squashes and cabbages, wood and grain, were part of his salary. But he was good, kind hearted and beloved by all. He had several modern ideas which, to some of the old-time worshipers, seemed almost sacrilegious. In fact a quartet of singers, consisting of Caleb, the doctor, Hilda and Marjorie, had at first excited much criticism. It

soon became, however, an important attraction at the church. Caleb had a fine deep bass; the doctor's voice was tenor; Hilda's alto, and Marjorie's soprano. There were many towns far greater in size than Rushton that would have been glad to boast of so good a quartet (and I might also add, so handsome a one).

The advent of winter is dreaded by nearly all. Yet when it is really upon one in the country it seems to lose its terrors. We read, with shivers running down our backs, an item in the daily papers which runs something like this: "Jan. 5th, Rushton, N. H., reports twenty degrees below zero." That probably means just before sunrise. Yet, when the sun is well up in the heavens we do not mind a sleigh ride of twenty miles. There is a certain fascination after all on a cold winter's day, to find one's self well wrapped and seated in a sleigh behind good horses, gliding over the country roads, whilst all about one are the signs of winter. There is a touch of color too, as some red painted cottage peeps into view from beyond the drifts of snow, or a patch of pine or hemlock flashes into view, with its beautiful greens

almost hidden by the weight of snow piled upon the spreading limbs which reach out from the woodland depths like some giant hands, as if to see how much weight they can hold.

Caleb was busy every day. He had no hours to spare except in the evenings when he found time to read law, often studying late into the night. He had determined to master the profession both because he found it an interesting study and also because he hoped to fit himself for something above day labor, according to his father's wish. Caleb had little time to think of anything except work and study. His Sundays were therefore peculiarly a recreation to him, both bodily and spiritually. The Abbotts were liberal in their views, but the home training had taught the duty of attending church, even had Caleb disliked the services. But the services were very agreeable to him and he found himself often looking forward to Sunday, and to Hilda.

The winter was going fast. Soon the "regulars" would shift from their winter quarters around the great stove in the general store, to the steps and boxes outside. But the evening as usual found

the crowd around the stove. They had gossiped and gossiped until almost every one in the village had been raked over or praised as the case might be. There were few to be praised, alas! as almost every family in town had some skeleton in its closet, which was sure to be discovered, no matter how small, by these mischief makers. The new doctor had come in for both praise and abuse; praise for his skill in saving the life of the Widow Fleming's daughter as well as his cure for Doctor Higgins's rheumatism. They could not abuse him definitely for if there were a skeleton in his family closet they had not as yet discovered it. About all they could find to criticise were his good clothes, fresh linen collar, and the fact that he shaved every day.

"Well, I can't see as if that's anything agin him," retorted the Deacon. "He don't have to plough or shovel manure. If he did he might wear overalls and go without a collar."

"Yes, and they do say he treats the poor pretty square," said Seth. "I heard how he didn't charge the widow anything for tending her

daughter. Receipted the bill right before her and said, 'That's all right.' "

"Humph," growled another, "that's probably 'cause he never spected to git it. He charged me 'nough for my old woman when she was down with lung fever."

"Pulled her through, didn't he?" Seth answered. "And a pretty tough case, too, so you said yourself. He knew you were working every day so why shouldn't he charge you what is right. We ain't all poor folks round here. If we was where would he get his living?"

"That's so," said the Deacon. "But if things go right with him, looks as if he wouldn't have to work long; he's pretty sweet on the banker's daughter up there to Abbotts'."

"And speaking of the banker," said Seth, "they say as how he's got the railroad interested in putting a line through here. Said he'd buy so much stock."

"Well, I heard something 'bout that, too," replied the Deacon. "And someone said they saw two goggle-eyed fellers with some sticks and lines,

treepods, I think they called 'em, the other day, poking up and down the pastures."

"Oh! them's surveyors. And if they've got round you can bet there's some truth in the yarn," said Eb Holt.

"Well, I hope it'll go through," answered Seth. "It'll wake up the old town. There ain't nothing to see and if twan't for Kettchum kicking out a drunk now and then, and the old mail coach comin' in, there wouldn't be nothing to see."

"Ma wants some sugar," shouted one of the Fleming boys, who had just come in.

"Shut the door!" roared old Merrill, the store keeper.

"Say, Mr. Merrill," the boy went on, after shutting the door, "what makes your sugar so wet? Ma told me to tell you that it's all damp lumps."

"Oh, Merrill keeps the drinking bucket on the counter over the barrel and the bucket leaks, of course!" said some one sarcastically.

"Merrill don't know it leaks, but it's a handy place to keep the bucket, and it makes the sugar weigh heavy; see?" added another wag

"Oh you shut up!" angrily retorted Mr. Merrill. "What do you know 'bout grocery trade, anyhow?"

"Oh, well, Merrill, I'm sorry I gave you away; but I do know this 'bout your grocery biz; and that is, some things weigh heavy and some weigh light." Having said his say the merry fellow "lit out" before a turnip hurled at his head by Old Merrill should strike him.

"Speaking of weighing," said Seth, trying to turn the subject and get Merrill good natured again, "how much do you weigh, Ed?"

"Oh, I ain't sure," Ed replied, stepping on the scales. "One hundred and eighty by these; I did weigh one hundred and seventy in West Village a week ago. Guess they ain't the same kind of scales," with a wink to the crowd.

"Pretty near fat enough to kill," said Hen.

"Yes," answered Ed with a grin. "Guess if I keep on gaining I'll be fat enough to kill by hog time." But in spite of these sallies a dampness seemed to have fallen upon the "regulars"—almost as damp as Merrill's sugar. Merrill himself was still glum, probably because one of the secrets of

the grocery trade had been discovered. First one and then another "store guest" arose with a yawn, buttoned his great coat and started for home, leaving Merrill alone with his scales and water bucket.

* * * * *

One day toward the latter part of winter Caleb was brought home by two of the loggers with a bad cut on the head. While loading his sled with logs, and being as he supposed out of reach of any falling trees, he had suddenly felt a blow on the head, and sank in the snow beneath it. He was not, however, seriously hurt as it was one of the top branches which had hit him and not the trunk of the tree itself, which would certainly have killed him. The wound, while only a scalp wound, bled freely, and it was owing to a weakness from loss of blood which necessitated his being carried home. One of the men had hurried ahead to inform Mrs. Abbott that it was not a serious injury. But Marjorie was out in the barn feeding her pet pigeons. She consequently knew nothing of it until she saw them bringing Caleb into the yard. It was then, when she saw him lying there on the

sled so still with the blood all over his face and matted in his hair, that she realized what his life meant to her. It was only by a supreme effort that she kept from fainting. Hurrying into the house, where they had lain Caleb on the great, old-fashioned lounge, Marjorie knelt by his side, and taking his hand in hers piteously said:

"Oh, Caleb, are you much hurt? Have they sent for the doctor? Is there anything I can do? You must not die! I,—we all love you so—say that you are not much hurt."

Caleb, smiling weakly, asked, "Do you all love me so much that you would feel sorry to see me die?"

"Oh Caleb, don't joke, don't speak so, of course we all love you."

"Well," he answered, "if you all love me so much I don't think I will die this time. It will take more than the twig of a tree to knock me out; but I do feel a little faint. That's all. I will be all right tomorrow. But here is Doctor Sherman. He will soon tell you that there won't be any funeral to attend this time. Won't you, Sherman?"

"Oh, yes!" answered the doctor, partly to Caleb, and partly to Marjorie who had arisen blushingly, that the doctor might not see her kneeling by Caleb and holding his hand.

"He will be all right in a day or two. He won't even need careful nursing," he added somewhat bitterly. "But it is a nasty hit, and much more and I am afraid we should have had the funeral!" Then, turning to his patient, "You have lost lots of blood, old man, too! As far as the cut goes, I guess a stitch or two will fix that: and with your fine thick hair your beauty won't be spoiled, in fact it never will be noticed," rattled on the doctor. Skilfully performing the operation and giving Caleb a little advice as to what to do and what not to do for a day or two, Dr. Sherman hastily took his departure after telling Mrs. Abbott to make her son keep quiet for a day or so. He did not even ask for Marjorie, who had stolen up to her room, there to give vent to her pent up emotions

Marjorie herself had suddenly awakened to the fact that Caleb was all the world to her; that she loved him as only a pure, loving woman can love.

Yet she did not feel that Caleb loved her. He had always treated her like a sister and he seemed to treat Hilda, too, in the same way that he did herself. Did he love Hilda? She could not tell. But this she did feel; that Caleb was her idol, her ideal of a man, and happy indeed would be the woman who could claim his great heart. Poor Marjorie! lying there upon her bed, first happy with the recognition of her own love, then sad with uncertainty as to her right of loving Caleb. At last with an effort she arose; and, removing all traces of her tears, again went bravely down the stairs, vowing that Caleb should never know of the anguish of these last hours, nor how deep was her love of him.

And Doctor Sherman, who had seen at once, with a lover's intuition, who held Marjorie's heart, wondered if Caleb reciprocated that great gift. He had thought it was Hilda whom Caleb preferred. Was he playing with both their hearts? But no! He knew Caleb too well to think that. Lucky fellow, he thought, with the two dearest girls in Rushton in love with him! "Which did he prefer?" he asked himself in perplexity. He determined to know even if he had to be so rude

as to ask Caleb himself. Were not he and Caleb fast friends? Why should Caleb take offence? It would not be through idle curiosity that he would ask him. He only thought it fair to Marjorie to find out the truth. Perhaps Caleb was ignorant of Marjorie's feelings. Then, if Caleb really had no intentions toward Marjorie—would it not be best to open Caleb's eyes? He determined to do so and if it really was Marjorie that he preferred, "Oh, then!" with a sigh, "I suppose I can live down my sorrow. Others have lived." But then, another one might not have had so deep love for a girl such as Marjorie. Should he give her up to Caleb without a struggle? Should he try and win her for himself? At last his better nature triumphed. When he had arrived home he had decided that if Caleb really loved Marjorie, he must simply give up his practice here; perhaps apply for a surgeon's berth on a man-of-war. He had often thought that he would like such a life. Now he knew he would. Perhaps he could, in his travels to foreign lands and among new faces, forget!

It was an assured fact that the railroad was about to be built through Rushton. Any one who wished for work could now obtain it. Kettchum's hotel was filled with boarders and Kettchum was obliged much against his will, to buy every old cow for miles around to be slaughtered by Skinner, the butcher, to supply meat for the working crowd. It was the intention of the railroad officials to build a depot in Rushton which should be an ornament to the place, and their plans called for brick and granite. They wished if possible to find suitable granite near at hand; and their engineers had been looking over the land to see if such stone could be found.

One Sunday afternoon Caleb started out for his usual Sunday stroll. Sunday was the only day in which Caleb really had time to think. He had formed the habit of going over the farm to see what there was to be done through the coming week, and again he walked as usual across field and pasture looking over walls, fences, glancing at the trees; noticing as he went along what needed repairing. Here a wall needed topping; the apple trees had sent up suckers and shoots dur-

ing the past year that must be pruned. He thought he should sow down the clover and red top the piece where his corn had been planted the previous year, and turn up a new piece this spring for corn in the ten-acre lot. Yes, his blueberry pasture ought to have some care. Part of it at least should be burned over. So he wandered on, picking up a stone here and there; or now and then a twig which the wintry winds had dislodged. For although it was Sunday, Caleb never could walk over a stone in his mowing piece, as some farmers can. He kept on his way until he had crossed the meadow and over to the hill where his father had worked so hard felling timber that his son might finish his college education. Caleb's thoughts went back to the time a year ago when his noble father had given up his life in the mad waters of the Merrimack. As he stood looking over the now barren waste, he thought of the many hours of hard labor his father had expended for him. While gazing over the land of stump and rock, he noticed some one down on all fours creeping over the rocks, now picking up a piece

of stone, then again breaking off a piece with a hammer which he carried with him.

"What can he be doing?" wondered Caleb, "and what is he here for? Well, I suppose there is just one way to find out; and that is to go over and ask him." Caleb crossed the piece of sprout land which lay between the meadow and the hill beyond, and started to ascend the hill just as the stranger had finished his antics and had himself started down the hill.

"Good afternoon, stranger," saluted Caleb.

"Good afternoon," replied the stranger. "Nice day, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," answered Caleb. "And it being such a fine day I thought I would take a stroll around."

"Just what I have been doing, although my stroll combines business with pleasure. I was looking at the stone over there. Quite likely looking granite. I am the engineer for the new railroad line which is going through here. My name is Stevens," continued the stranger.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Stevens," said Caleb, holding out his hand, which the other took. "My

name is Abbott. So you like the looks of that granite over there?"

"Yes, I do," replied Mr. Stevens. "It's almost identical with Barre granite and would make a fine building stone. 'Twould be good for monumental work, too, although it is hardly dark enough to take the proper polish. It takes Quincy granite for a dark, rich polish, you know."

"No," answered Caleb, "granite is something I don't know much about. But I have often thought this granite could be made to bring in something."

"Bring in something?" replied Mr. Stevens with enthusiasm, "why, if I am not mistaken, there's a fortune there. Of course it's rusty and seamy on top, but I have been following the seams and scraping away the dirt. Yes, if I am not mistaken, there's acres of solid granite over there, extending down—well, to China, for all I know. Wonder who owns this land, anyhow?"

"I do," answered Caleb.

"You do?" exclaimed Stevens in surprise. "Well, I've just put my foot in it as usual, and let my mouth run away with my head. That's my

great fault, talking and telling all I know, just when I shouldn't. Now here is a junk of worthless land, that I dare say I could have bought for five dollars an acre and made the cost and more, too, on this one job alone. Now I suppose you would want, well perhaps a thousand for it?"

"Yes," Caleb replied with a smile, "I think several thousands. I have thought for a long while that there was something in this stone, but I have never had time to look into it. Still, had any one come along and offered me a fair price for this land I should not have sold without investigating on my own account. Now that I have had an expert's opinion, gratis, it will take a very good offer to buy it. However," seeing a disappointed expression pass across Stevens' face, "I like your looks, and you have given me your opinion of the land's worth. Perhaps there will be something in it for you, after all. I do not know anything about granite or the quarrying of it; neither have I time nor funds at present to get it on the market. Perhaps we can start a little quarry and I can let you in somehow. And you

in turn, no doubt, in your business could dispose of some of the granite."

"Indeed I could," replied the engineer, "I could place an order now for several hundred tons. I have it, in fact," he exclaimed, his face lighting up. "Why not form a stock company? You hold the controlling interest, issue so much stock, and the money for the stock will start the business. I'll guarantee to dispose of the granite as fast as it can be worked."

"I should like time to think this matter over," answered Caleb. "As this is Sunday, I prefer to talk about it some other day. I am at leisure every evening. Why can't you run over soon, and we will talk it up? That's where I live, that large, square, white house right across the meadow, on the opposite hill."

"Well, I will drop in; and if you don't mind I'll make it tomorrow night. The sooner the better, you know," replied the engineer with a laugh.

True to his agreement, Stevens called to see Caleb the next evening. As he walked across the meadow he overtook Marjorie with her arms full of pussy willows. She, too, was on her way to the

house. Coming upon her suddenly as Mr. Stevens turned the corner by a clump of alders he stood still for a moment in silent admiration. "By Jove! how beautiful!" he muttered to himself. "I wonder who she can be!" But he had not long to wait, as he was now almost at the house; and, Marjorie turning, said to him:

"Do you wish to see Mr. Abbott? If you do I think you will find him in the barn."

"Thank you, yes," replied Stevens as he gallantly raised his hat. "I do want to see him."

He found Caleb in the barn milking. They greeted each other pleasantly and Stevens remarked:

"Say, Mr. Abbott, if we put that deal through O. K. you won't have to milk cows much longer. You'll be able to hire a man, and sit around figuring up your profits."

"Think so?" replied Caleb. "I am not quite as sanguine as you about big profits; and," laughingly, "I think I will keep the cows for a sure thing until I see the money coming in."

"That's right, too, but if you don't think me rude will you tell me where you get such words as

'sanguine,' way back here in this back woods town? The majority of farmers don't use such words as that; it flavors somewhat of college, don't you know."

"Well, and why not?" answered Caleb. "I did go to college, still I don't know that I have more than the average intelligence. My father was considered a bright man although he never got rich, and my mother had a good education. But in return, if you won't get offended, Mr. Stevens, let me give you a little advice."

"Fire away! I won't take any offence."

"Well, in the first place, just because you happen to be in a 'wayback place,' don't take every one you meet for a Rube. There are some pretty bright people in these small towns hereabouts and Rushton boasts of quite a number. There's many a man in this little town going about his farm with his pants tucked into his boots, wearing an old blue flannel shirt with sleeves rolled up, who can write his check for thousands. I am through now. If you say so, we will adjourn to the house, and have a talk."

"Thanks for your advice, Mr. Abbott. Say,

what is your first name? I don't like being so formal. I like you; and you won't find me such a bad lot after you know me. By the way, I have got a letter from the Mayor of our city, and also notes of introduction from one or two other influential citizens. If we go into this deal together I want you to write to them inquiring about me, as I am an entire stranger to you, you know. But I started to say my name is John Stevens, though I am usually called Jack."

"My name is Caleb; very few call me 'Mr. Abbott,'" Caleb replied. "Come right in; this is my mother, Mr. Stevens. She will entertain you a moment while I wash up a little. Then I will join you."

They were soon seated in the great front room. Caleb, taking up a box of cigars, said:

"Do you smoke?"

"Oh! certainly," taking a cigar. "What! genuine Henry Clays?" in surprise. "Your words are coming back to me very soon. I hardly looked for my favorite brand of Cubas in a farm house."

"You see," replied Caleb, "I have a New York friend who keeps me supplied in cigars."

After a few more pleasantries the two men got down to business, talking far into the night. Their conversation resulted in the formation of a stock company to be known as the "Rushton Granite Company," disposing of the stock in Rushton if they could get subscribers enough. Caleb was to own half; the balance to be sold at so much a share. Caleb was to be the treasurer; the next heaviest holder of stock, the president, and Stevens resident manager. As soon as the stock was disposed of they were to choose a board of directors and start business at once. Caleb in the meantime was to see Dr. Higgins and Dr. Sherman and the Deacon. He also intended writing Mr. Upton, who had decided to locate in Rushton and in fact was now closing out some of his business interests in New York.

Mrs. Abbott, who had been sitting up in the dining room, came in to bid Caleb good night.

"Oh, my! Caleb," she exclaimed, "what a smoke! You can't see across the room. I don't often find fault, but, my dear boy, you will ruin my curtains."

"Mother," he replied, playfully putting his arm

around her and drawing her to him, "if what we are thinking of is a success, we shall have new curtains; real Irish point, too."

"Well, I hope for your sake, whatever it is it will be a success, but you have not told me yet what it is. And as for real Irish point lace, you can get them for the future Mrs. Abbott. I guess those old ones will last as long as I do."

"Now, mother, I don't want to hear you talk about not 'lasting.' If you wish to see the future Mrs. Abbott I am sure you will be here a long time yet. But stop joking. Let me tell you all about the new scheme."

Caleb recited briefly all that had been planned and Mrs. Abbott replied:

"I certainly hope it will be a success. What would your father say could he know about the wealth supposed to be in that barren land!"

"But, mother," softly replied Caleb, "we know that father does know. Else we are not true Christians. Good night."

"Good night, my boy; God bless and keep you," she said huskily as she kissed him good night.

* * * * *

It was "good doings" again, as they say in the country. The frost was out of the ground; the roads were smooth and hard. Once again the blue birds appeared, and the robins sang sweetly a morning carol in the maple by Marjorie's window. Marjorie and Hilda again went riding through the lanes and over the highways. But Marjorie did not seem as happy as a year ago. She would ride by Hilda's side sometimes, mile after mile, without speaking, with a sad look on her lovely face. Hilda had noticed her silently for some time past; she felt that she ought to know the trouble, for trouble it evidently was; and Hilda, who had never had a sister, had grown to love Marjorie with a sister's love.

One bright day in May, one of those rare May days, when the air is soft and balmy and the birds singing from every bush, when even the brook itself seems glad as it ripples over the pebbles, and all nature seems happy, Marjorie, after a long silence, gave vent to a sigh, so deep, so sorrowful that Hilda exclaimed, anxiously:

"Dear Marjorie, what is it that troubles you? Let us dismount here and sit on this grassy knoll,

while you tell me what it is. I have noticed for a long time that something is on your mind. I cannot bear to see you sad, dear Marjorie. Sit here beside me. I love you so; perhaps I can help you." Marjorie's fair head dropped gently in Hilda's lap while the tears, so long kept back, flowed as freely as if they were jealous of the rippling brook. She told Hilda her story; the story of her love for Caleb. While Hilda, stroking her fair hair (with a startled look in her own eyes, that luckily could not be seen), tried to comfort and console Marjorie. "Thank God!" said Hilda to herself, "that she has not discovered my secret. It would be even harder for her to know that I loved him too!"

So they sat and talked, until Marjorie, with a laugh, arose, saying:

"There! you know my secret now. I have had a good cry and I feel better already. I am going to try and forget," she added, "and be a livelier companion for you, Hilda dear. Look! what a stretch for a gallop! Let us see who can get to the cross-roads first."

Before summer had arrived the stock company

was an assured success. The stock had been subscribed for; sheds had been built; derricks erected; stonecutters and quarrymen hired; and the works had a busy aspect. Jack Stevens had proved himself a hustler, and the company had all the work they could do with their limited facilities. Mr. Upton had run on for a few days and was very enthusiastic over the outlook for the new company.

"Sell all the stock you can, Caleb," he said, "and I will take the balance." So at the first meeting of the directors, it was found that Caleb and Mr. Upton were the heaviest owners of the stock, and Mr. Upton was elected president of the new company.

"Just to keep me from getting rusty when I locate here," he laughingly said to Caleb. "I have got to have some figures to go over once in a while and that's a good beginning, 'Samuel Upton, President of the Rushton Granite Company.' I feel more proud of that title already, than I did of the title, President of the —— Street National Bank of New York. And by the way, Caleb, I saw an auction bill of a place for sale, the Silas Holt

place, so-called. Do you know anything about it?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Caleb. "That is one of the finest places in town, or rather it used to be. Since Silas, the elder, died his son has let the farm run out. But the buildings are in good shape, and there is a fine lot of timber growth on it. There's a grand view, also. You see young Silas had quite a little money left him. When his father was alive he found it hard to get hold of a dollar. That's why, probably, when he found himself comparatively rich, he could not stand prosperity, and got to be a high roller, until he had spent all his money. He mortgaged the place for all he could to Cyrus Whitney, and there is a clause in the mortgage deed, so I have heard, that denies him the right to sell the timber. He can't raise any more money, and the interest being due, Cyrus has foreclosed; I am sorry, too, because Silas is a kind-hearted fellow and has done some good with his money besides throwing it away. They say he sees the folly of his ways now it is too late. But the place has got to go."

"I should like to see the place," replied Mr.

Upton. "Will you drive me over tomorrow?"

"Certainly," replied Caleb.

The next day Caleb and Mr. Upton drove over to the Holt estate.

"Grand!" exclaimed Mr. Upton. "What a glorious view! Is that the timber you speak of?" pointing to the north side of the hill.

"Yes," Caleb answered, "that's one lot; I believe there are three lots all together."

"Caleb," said Mr. Upton, "I want that place if I can get it. What do you think it will sell for at auction?"

"That's rather a hard question to answer. Taking a country valuation of it I should say it was worth twenty-five hundred. It may bring a little more; perhaps less. It depends on whether any one wants it or not. There's close to two thousand in timber alone. I suppose there will be some lumber men at the sale, who will carry the price up to that figure or more, simply on account of the timber."

"I want that place," replied Mr. Upton. "If four thousand will buy it, I want you to buy it for me. Of course I know that such a sum is more

than the place is worth, but that view is worth one thousand to me, and the aroma from those pines is worth another thousand on account of my daughter. Now if you will attend this sale and bid it in for me, for anything up to this figure, or even a hundred or two more, I will give you a real estate agent's commission for the favor."

"Oh! I will do you the favor gladly for nothing," Caleb answered, "and I could not think of accepting any such commission as that."

"But I insist," said Mr. Upton.

"If you insist on paying me, you can pay me for the time I lose attending the sale; perhaps half a day's time."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," Mr. Upton replied. "I want you to buy it for me, and I want to pay you what I should pay any one else to buy it for me. Now will you do it? Or shall I get some stranger to do it for me, who perhaps will stand in with the auctioneer and split afterward?"

"Well," said Caleb, "if you put it in that light, I will buy it for you and we will settle the price afterwards."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A COUNTRY AUCTION.

A few days after this conversation the auction took place. Caleb was on hand bright and early, accompanied by Hilda and Marjorie, both of whom were in ignorance of his intention to buy the place for Mr. Upton. Each wished to attend the sale, Marjorie having heard of the fun to be had at one of these country auctions, and Hilda because she had never before attended a country "vendoo." Although Caleb knew that the real estate would be almost the last to be sold, he thought he would make a day of it in order that the young ladies should enjoy the whole event.

Silas Holt was to sell all the personal effects and stock. "May as well clean up everything, as long as I have got to lose the old homestead, and start over again," he sadly yet bravely told Caleb. "It seems a shame to sell such a place at auction,

though. It is certainly worth twenty-five hundred, and I don't suppose it will bring near that figure. Cyrus Whitney wants it, and nobody dares to bid against him, you know."

"Yes," I know many people stand in fear of him," Caleb answered. "But keep up your spirits, Silas, you are young yet."

"They are about to begin the sale. Come Miss Upton and Hilda; here is a good place to stand," said Caleb, turning to the young ladies who were waiting in eager expectancy for the sale to open.

To any one who has never attended a country auction I should advise him to do so at the first opportunity. There are all kinds of people there from the country urchin to the be-whiskered auctioneer himself, with his hooked nose and eagle eye. The celebrity of all the country towns; and the sharpest man usually to be found. Also the wealthy summer resident who may pick up some ancient bit of furniture, a spinning wheel or perhaps a piece of genuine blue ware. The lunch at noon under the trees gives a zest to the day; for none of those all day auctions are complete with-

out the crackers and cheese, doughnuts, coffee and cider.

The auctioneer had now mounted his box and begun his harangue. "Come, ladies and gentlemen, crowd around here where I can see you. We've got lots to sell today and we've got to hustle. Everything here is to be sold and your price is our price." Here a wag inquired of the auctioneer:

"Are you goin' to be sold, Josh?"

"No, but you are, before the sale is over," quickly replied the man of the hooked nose and eagle eye. After the laugh was over he continued: "We will begin on the household articles first, then farm implements and tools, then the stock; and lastly the real estate. Terms are ten dollars or under for cash; over ten dollars, sixty days' note, if bankable, except on the real estate, terms of which will be given later. Now here we go! The first article is this beautiful rug." Holding up about a square yard of old carpet. "Here's the outside. Here's the inside. How much for both sides? Ten cents I hear, ten—ten—ten—fifteen,

do I hear it?—fifteen, do you say it? Are you all done at ten? Sold then to Mrs. Brennan.

"Now here's another, a better one," holding up another piece worse if anything than the piece just sold. "Five cents some one says—five cents—six —seven—eight—eight I have, do you say ten? Are you all done at eight? Well, I can't wait all day. Sold to Mrs. Brennan.

"Now here's a bed, real live goose feathers. See 'em fly?" (tossing it up). "If I didn't have a hold of it 'twould fly out of sight. How much? Come, give us a bid. It's worth ten dollars of anybody's money. One dollar? Well now, ain't that too bad? Should think they'd want to fly out of this company. One dollar,—one dollar,—one dollar, —two do you say it? Two, do I hear it? Come, Arnold, don't sleep on the floor any longer, when a bed like this is going for a dollar. Ah? one fifty —now two—two—now three? Well, say two fifty then,—two—two—two— Who says a quarter? Split it up! Two twenty-five; now two fifty—two fifty, now three; three, I have; are you all done at three? Once—twice—third and last call— Sold to Jake Fernald."

And so on for the entire forenoon. Just at twelve, lunch was passed around. Marjorie, Hilda and Caleb thoroughly enjoyed it too.

"Isn't it fun!" laughed Marjorie. "Did you see that old man that gave twenty-five cents for a mouse trap? You can buy one anywhere for ten cents. Yet how pleased he seemed."

"And did you notice the lady that got a complete chamber set for four dollars? She really did get a bargain," said Hilda.

"Yes," said Caleb, "they get strange prices at auction. Some articles bring many times what they are worth, and others bring nowhere near their value."

"What a funny man the auctioneer is," said Marjorie. "I never heard so much wit in such a short time. He outdoes Mark Twain. I honestly believe he could make a fortune if he should jot his sayings down."

"Oh he's funny and he's bright, too," said Caleb. "He gets good prices and is in great demand all through the country. They are going to sell the stock now, and then the real estate. If you young

ladies are not interested in stock let us sit here in the shade and talk."

"Yes, certainly," answered both in chorus. So they sat and talked and laughed until finally the auctioneer, followed by the crowd, came again under the trees. After drinking a couple of glasses of cider and wiping the perspiration from his brow with a big red bandana, he began to recite the story of the real estate.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, here is one of the finest estates in the state of New Hampshire. To the residents hereabouts, there is nothing to say. You all know this property. But for the benefit of any stranger, should there be any here who desire to bid, I will state that there are two hundred acres, more or less; about one hundred tillage and pasture, the balance wood and timber. It is estimated that there is nearly a million feet of timber alone. The buildings, as you can see, are in good repair, well built, high and sightly. The terms are one hundred down at time of sale; balance, cash within thirty days, excepting for the mortgage of fifteen hundred, which can remain if

desired. Property is subject to unpaid taxes if any. I am now open for bids."

For several moments not a sound was heard. There is something depressing about a mortgagee's sale of an old homestead. There is almost always a hush for a while before a bid is heard. Cyrus Whitney stood on the veranda at a distance from Caleb. In fact he could not see him. He had no idea that any one would bid against himself beyond the price of the timber alone; knowing that the timber was worth at least two thousand dollars he felt perfectly safe in starting the bid.

"Eighteen hundred," he finally squeaked from his perch on the piazza.

"Two thousand," came from under the trees. A two hundred bid is quite a jump. Caleb had spoken, and both Hilda and Marjorie turned to him in amazement. He, bidding on this property, thought Hilda, and against her father, too? How did he dare? What will he do with it?

"How can he pay for it?" thought Marjorie, who knew something about Caleb's finances.

The bid hung at two thousand for some time. The auctioneer had again to go over the value of

the place. After dwelling for some time on two thousand and threatening to throw up the stick, the squeaking voice of Cyrus Whitney once more raised the offer twenty-one hundred.

"Twenty-three hundred," from under the trees. Everybody was looking now to see who the bidder might be, yet only a few could locate who he was. Cyrus Whitney himself was determined to own this property up to its real value, but he had hoped to get it much less. He was thoroughly angry, and knowing something of the auctioneer and his sharp methods of doing business, cried out shrilly:

"Say, are you carrying those bids along against me?" But the auctioneer paid no attention to him, only repeating again and again:

"Twenty-three hundred, twenty-three hundred; four, do you say it? Once, twice, third and last call." But no: Cyrus wouldn't give up yet.

"Twenty-three fifty," he again squeaked.

"Twenty-five hundred," from under the trees. Everybody was now in a high state of excitement. Soon the word was passed around the crowd that Caleb Abbott was bidding against Rushton's Shylock, and old Shylock's own daughter was by his

side. What kind of a game was this, anyhow? After dwelling on "twenty-five hundred" a long time, again the auctioneer threatened to throw up his stick.

"Twenty-five fifty," again came from the piazza.

"Twenty-seven hundred." The excitement waxed greater. That's above the real value, according to country values! Silas Holt himself was all smiles. Who could be forcing the price up to this figure, he wondered? Why! he would have plenty of money after all. After another long wait:

"Twenty-seven fifty," came from the piazza.

"Twenty-eight hundred," followed from the trees. The auctioneer himself thought that now the limit had surely been reached. He was surprised to hear almost as quickly:

"Twenty-eight hundred fifty," from the piazza. Shylock's blood was up. What if he did give a few hundred more than the place was worth. He had never yet been beaten. People should not have the chance to say he was beaten now.

"Twenty-nine hundred," came from under the trees.

"Twenty-nine fifty," from the piazza. Caleb stood like a gladiator. His arms were folded, head erect. All eyes were turned in his direction. He knew who was bidding against him, yet he could not understand why Cyrus should bid so persistently. Still he had a thousand yet to offer, and he felt sure Cyrus would quit before that figure was reached.

"Three thousand," from Caleb. Would old Shylock keep it up? No, his limit had been reached. After a long wait up went the fatal stick.

"Sold! What's the name?"

"Caleb Abbott," answered Caleb, in a clear voice.

A few nights after the sale the usual crowd collected at the store. The weather made a difference in the choice of seats. Instead of squatting around the stove they were all outside in the mid-summer twilight, some sitting on the steps whittling; some on the empty cases outside. Most of the "regulars" had been over to inspect the new depot, which was fast nearing completion, and all talk tonight was concentrated on two subjects, the new depot and Caleb Abbott. They had discussed Sam

Young and Mrs. Bean for days past. It had happened that Sam Young and Mrs. Bean had packed up and gone away one night in the early summer; vamosed; eloped so they said. Such a scandal had been unknown in Rushton for years. But they had gone, that was sure. Young left behind him numerous unpaid bills, and Mrs. Bean a houseful of little Beans. "Pea beans," so Ed remarked. But that subject had been worn threadbare.

The auction had taken place. Caleb Abbott had bought the Silas Holt place for three thousand dollars.

"Can't understand it," said Hen. "'Tain't but a little over a year ago that Old Shylock had a mortgage on Caleb's place for five hundred. Now he's gone into the granite business, bought the finest place in town, and is studying law, too, so I hearn."

"How did you know his place was mortgaged?" retorted Seth. "Seems as if some folks knows everybody's business."

"Well, you needn't get your dander up, Seth," replied Hen. "Father saw it recorded down to the

County building, when he was down there a year ago. That's how I know."

"What did I tell ye, over a year ago?" said the Deacon, "when you fellers was talking 'bout his comin' down off his high hoss and going to work? Didn't I tell ye then that I guessed he knew how? And while you fellers have been sitting around talking about him, he's made money; in less than two years, too."

"How the devil did he get money 'nough in that time to buy a three thousand dollar place and pay up a mortgage besides?" asked Hen.

"How?" almost yelled Seth, "how? In the first place by selling cows that warn't bringing him in a dollar, then by working day and night and saving his money. Didn't I ask you last winter when grain was so high how much you was making on milk?"

"Yes, you did," retorted Hen, "and I told you I sold forty dollars in milk in December."

"Yes, that's so," answered Seth. "Then I asked you what you paid for grain to the milk trust, and you said your grain bill for December was thirty-two dollars. Ever take thirty-two from forty when

you went to skule, Hen, and see what's left? If you didn't I'll tell you; it's eight. And you don't say nothing of the hay and fodder you feed, besides your time."

"Yes, that may be all right; but you ain't showed me yet where he got his money," replied Hen with a sneer.

"Well, I can guess where he got some of it," answered Seth, who was always Caleb's champion. "He kept his best cows,—butter cows. What with his egg and butter money, a high-priced boarder, and selling wood at four dollars a cord delivered; working for three fifty a day; doing mowing at fifty cents an hour; and doing his own work before and after his day's labor; besides tradin' and other ways we don't know anything about; and piling it all away. I guess you'll find the money accumulated easy."

"That's so," chuckled the deacon. "And you mark my words; that young man will be the richest man in Rushton inside ten years, barring the banker."

"Yes," Seth answered, "you fellers just sit around and see him grow! But you're all so curi-

ous 'bout the Silas Holt place. I'll just give you a piece of news to chaw over. 'Tain't no secret; if 'twas I'd keep it to myself. Caleb didn't buy that place at all. He just bid it in for Mr. Upton, the banker, and he got five per cent., or one hundred and fifty dollars for doing it. That's one way he gets his money. Makes more in one day than you fellers do a-raisin' milk in a year."

Now the secret was out, everyone felt relieved. Strange, is it not, how certain people worry about other people's business? Some one starts a store. Everybody looks dubious. "'Twill never pay in this town!" They begin to feel sorry for the poor fool who has made the venture. But it does pay, and the other store? that still pays, too. Susie Smith comes out Easter Sunday in a new hat. "It must have cost as much as three dollars. Her father better pay Jim Jones the two dollars he's owed him for over a year, 'stead of his daughter buying new three-dollar hats." But Susie earns her own money, she doesn't know anything about her father's "owing two dollars." Strange she doesn't know it; everybody else in the village does. But there are a few things that these gossiping

villagers do not get hold of, and among the few are Caleb's affairs. He knows how to keep his affairs to himself, a characteristic which few of us have.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FALLEN FORTUNES.

Mr. Upton had come on from New York to make his home in Rushton, and tonight he was sitting on the piazza together with Marjorie, Mrs. Abbott, and Caleb.

"Do you know, Caleb, I can realize tonight how a man feels who has been serving a long sentence in prison, and has just obtained his liberty. Marjorie, my dear child, do you realize that I am through work, and that I am to be with you for all time?"

"Yes, Papa, I do, and I am so happy. Won't it be nice to go to our own new home on the hill? Not but what I have enjoyed myself very much here, dear Mrs. Abbott," she quickly added, "but there is something so different about your own

home, no matter how nice and homelike some other place may be."

"Indeed you are right, Marjorie," Mrs. Abbott replied. "I don't think I could possibly leave my own home."

"I hope you will never have to, Mother," said Caleb. Then turning to Mr. Upton he continued, "I suppose you intend remodeling right away, do you not?"

"Oh, yes," Mr. Upton replied, "and I want you to take general charge if you will. Of course there will be a boss carpenter and a boss plumber. I intend putting up a windmill and shall have both the house and barn piped. And also a landscape gardener. But I want you to overlook it all, if you will."

"I have no other engagements that will prevent me. Haying is over, and it will be a little slack from now until sledding again. Still, it is rather out of my line. Do you think me capable of the duties?"

"I certainly do, else I should not have asked you to take the position. I don't expect you to do

much of the work, but to use your brains while the workmen use their hands."

"What improvements do you intend to make, Papa?" asked Marjorie.

"Well," her father replied, "I have my plans pretty well laid out. Let me give you a rough idea of what I intend to do. Of course I want to agree with you in regard to the house. Beginning with the barn, I can't see as I can improve it any on the outside at all. It's a fine large barn, and needs nothing on the outside but paint. Of course I shall repaint all the buildings. But I shall remodel the lower part of the barn entirely. I intend to put in a new floor, and finish the interior in Norway pine or cypress. I shall have box stalls and a harness room, also a room for the coachman. I intend ploughing up and leveling down that ungainly hump in front of the house, grading the lawn properly. Then I shall build on a large veranda, having for an underpinning our rusty granite from the Rushton Granite Company. I don't know of anything else to speak of on the exterior of the house. It is a grand old colonial mansion now, and I don't want to spoil its lines.

Inside, however, I shall make many changes. That is," laughingly he added, "with your permission, my dear Marjorie, as you will be mistress. Here are some of the possible changes. In the first place we must have a bath room. Do you remember that great, unused closet near the central chimney upstairs? Well, that will make a fine bath room, it is so conveniently situated. Then, downstairs I shall take away the partition which divides the hallway from the large front room, open the whole into one great living room. I shall also change the front stairway; and face the old fireplace with tile or fancy brick. I shall take out those two closets which are each side the fireplace and make cozy corners in their places. We'll put hard wood floors in the dining room and also in the south room, which I shall convert into a library and den for my own use. I shall use the large shed which connects with the house and which has been used for a wood shed in which to put in either steam or hot water for heating purposes. The windmill which I shall erect, and in fact have already placed an order for, will furnish both the house and barn with water. We'll also

refurnish the entire house; repainting or staining all the wood work and repapering every room. The papering and furnishing I shall leave entirely to you, my daughter. Now do you think I have given you a clear idea of my plans?"

"Indeed I do," replied Marjorie, "and I shall just enjoy my share of the responsibility."

"I think," said Caleb, "that your ideas are all right. But it will cost a lot of money, and it will be quite an innovation for Rushton."

"Well," smilingly answered Mr. Upton, "I guess I can pay for it and still have a few dollars left. I want everything up to date, even if it is in the country."

Cyrus Whitney was going wrong. He was not making money fast enough, at least so he thought. His greed was not satisfied with eight and ten per cent. per month. He wanted to double his money in a week's time if possible, and he thought he had found a way to do it. He had been advised to go into stocks. He had made quite a study of stocks and stock methods, and was thoroughly posted, he thought. So others have thought; trusted bank clerks, town treasurers, and others. But Cyrus

had some grounds for his confidence. He had been told to buy Coppers, and Coppers he had bought. Not much, but they paid. In fact they flew, and when Cyrus began to get his big returns in such a short time, he regretted that he had been all these years lending money for a paltry twenty or thirty per cent. Why it was just like finding money, this stock business! He hastened to convert his loans into cash, whenever he could; foreclosing some, selling others, in order to invest still further in stocks. In fact he was now a confirmed stock gambler with the gambler's craze. He could not let go. The more he lost the more anxious he was to place more where he had already invested with vain hopes for returns. It doesn't take long to spend a hundred thousand or so, when you are always on the wrong side of the market. He woke up every morning in anxious suspense as to what the day would bring forth, and it was pretty sure to bring forth something like this: "C B & Q off two points, send two thousand to cover." Or, "Copper down one and a half; must send fifteen hundred." And off would go the money never to return. One day he received a circular from a new

firm, "Pitcher & Vetts," stating that a firm was to be formed to control certain stocks. His pride knew no bounds. How did they know about him, Cyrus Whitney, way up here in Rushton? Ah, Cyrus! the hawk flies many miles for the little jay, and jays are thick in the country. He shifted his investments and while the circular only suggested a contribution of from one hundred to one thousand, Cyrus Whitney showed them that he was liberal, and sent them the last two thousand dollars he possessed. A few days later, the fatal yellow paper came, stating that because of an extra heavy shipment of gold to England, stocks are off two points, and demanding that he send four thousand at once. But Cyrus! The money-lender! He had not four thousand to send. So while Pitcher, who, a few years ago, was a dry goods clerk at nine dollars per week, was off on a cruise in his new ten thousand dollar yacht, and Vetts, who never had been anything but a gambler, was driving a four-in-hand somewhere through the country, poor Cyrus Whitney saw ruin staring him in the face. The fortune which it had taken a lifetime to accumulate was swept away in a few short months.

But he must not delay. His home would have to be mortgaged. He must have the money to meet the broker's demands, or lose everything. Ah! Cyrus, you are not alone, and here in Free America they won't even bury you after getting your all. They will do this at Monte Carlo—or send you home after you are broke.

Rushton was booming. Many of the old, unused buildings were now being occupied by families who had found work and located in town. Many of these places had been owned or partly owned by Cyrus Whitney, who in his anxiety to get ready money had sold them for anything they would bring. Caleb, who had by this time quite a sum of ready money, invested in several of these places and immediately found tenants to occupy them at a good rental. He had also bought the saw and grist mill, and hired Edmund Taylor to superintend the running of it. He was doing a big business at the mill at the present time owing principally to the building and repairing going on in the village. Mr. Upton was installed in his new home. The new depot was long since finished, and many cottages had been newly built. Rushton

had a board of trade and also a real estate syndicate formed of Mr. Upton, Jack Stevens, Doctors Sherman and Higgins, Deacon Patch, Caleb and a few others. They had bought all the land and buildings on both sides the main street, intending to tear down or remove the weather-beaten wooden buildings, and were to erect two fine blocks of two stories each for stores and offices. Merrill's grocery store was situated in one of these old buildings and it looked as if his days of business in Rushton were short.

Tonight around the old store the usual crowd were carrying on a brisk conversation.

"What yer going to do, Merrill, when the new Boston Branch Store opens up?" asked Ed.

"Don't know," sullenly replied Merrill. "Guess I can do business just the same."

"I don't know 'bout that," said Seth. "You'll have to meet their prices. If they sell coffee for twenty-five cents a pound, you can't get thirty-eight; and if they sell terbacca three for twenty-five you can't get ten cents a plug."

"I shall keep my prices just the same," retorted Merrill, "and I suppose you fellers that has been

grubbing on me an' using my heat all winter an' spitting terbacca juice all over the store will be the first ones to desert me."

"Got to keep up to the times, Merrill. If Rushton's going ahead we've got to go ahead with it," said the Deacon.

"Yes," angrily retorted Merrill, "an' you're one of 'em. You warn't satisfied with our nice little town, but you've got to help 'em out, with their new fangled notions. The new railroad, that's drove old John Libby out of business already. Now you're talking of a man for a post master that'll drive the widow post mistress out of business. Then you talk 'bout a new grocery store to drive me out of business, an' I suppose the next thing will be a new hotel and drive Kettchum out of town. Skinner is nearly broke now. Can't sell off the cart any more, with your western beef a-comin' in. Pretty soon there won't be an old inhabitant left."

"Well," answered Seth, "Libby's got money enough to live on; the widow gets her pension; there ain't many of us would be sorry to see Kettchum's joint break up, and if Skinner wants

to buy western beef 'stead of old cows he can still sell off the cart. These are movin' days, Merrill, an' we've got to move with 'em."

"That's so," said the Deacon with a chuckle. "And what did I tell yer 'bout Caleb Abbott moving along. Comin' most fast 'nough to suit yer, ain't he? Half owner of the Rushton Granite Company, director in the real estate syndicate, president of the board of trade, owner of a saw and grist mill and several pieces of real estate, just admitted to the bar as a practicin' lawyer, an' going to be selectman next town meetin', too. How does that sound for a self-made man that ain't twenty-five yet?"

"He's a pretty lucky man," said Ed with a sigh.

"Lucky," retorted Seth. "You all had the same chance. 'Tain't luck; it's work. It's seein' things as they come along. How many hours has he killed setting round this old stove a-talkin' of his neighbors? How many hours has he put in squattin' around old Kettchum's dirty table playin' forty-fives? I tell you it's work and brains. An' while ye fellers has been setting round here a-talkin' about him an' everybody else yer can

find to talk 'bout, he's been studyin' law to home evenings for over two years. That's how he's done it. Smart; you all know that. He ain't raised a tater or a onion without fust figuring out if there was any money in it."

"He'll be one of our next selectmen, by gosh!"

"Right you are, Seth," said Ed. "I admire him for his pluck. Some of you fellers think he's stuck up; he ain't. I know that. He ain't got time to stop and talk nothing with everybody he meets. That's all. He's square, and he'll get my vote, you can bet on that."

* * * * *

One morning after a slight fall of snow Mr. Upton drove over to Caleb's bright and early. He had his gun and hound with him. Meeting Caleb in the yard he asked:

"Have you been to breakfast yet, Caleb?"

"Oh, yes," answered Caleb, "some time ago. You see I don't have to get up and milk now. My man does all the chores, so I find it hard to kill time; I eat breakfast early."

"Well," replied Mr. Upton, "I am glad of that. Go get your gun and we will give the foxes a try.

This is a grand morning for them and they ought to run well. This dog is one I have on trial and I am anxious to use him. He is recommended highly and if he doesn't start a fox or two today I shall be greatly mistaken."

"I don't know," hesitated Caleb, "I don't want to disappoint you, but I have so much to do. I don't really think I ought to spare the time. Still, I should enjoy a fox hunt on such a day as this."

"Now what have you got to do today that can't wait until tomorrow?" asked Mr. Upton.

"Let me see; I've got to go to the mill with some orders for Taylor. Then there are some repairs to be made on the Cummings' cottage. I have a tenant waiting to go in just as soon as I can fix it up."

"Look here, Caleb," said Mr. Upton. "How long is it since you had a holiday?"

Caleb laughed. "Since you speak of it, with one exception it's just three years; and that exception was the Holt auction. Thanks to your liberality it was the best paid day's work I have ever done."

"If that auction is the only holiday you have had in three years it's about time you had another. I

insist on your coming with me. You have a man here to look after things. We pass the mill on our way, and you can let the repairs go one more day."

"You have settled it," answered Caleb. "The morning is so fine and the conditions are so good for starting a fox that I guess I will go. I am just longing for a shot at a fox. I sha'n't be but a minute getting ready. Come in while I get my gun and shells; and put on my boots."

Off they went. What is more exhilarating than a genuine fox hunt on some crisp winter morning, over hill and meadow, through woods and pastures, with the sound of the deep baying of the hounds always in your ears? The expectancy every moment of seeing the sly old fellow pop into view adds the final zest.

They went down the road, Caleb stopping at the mill to leave his orders. Then, with all care banished for the day, they started for the hunt. They crossed the brook and the meadow beyond which led to Cyrus Whitney's land. They had scarcely ascended the first knoll, a likely place for a fox with its wild, rocky surface, clumps of beech or oak here and there, or again an open, beyond which

lay the deep forest of pine and hemlock, when the hound with his nose to the ground caught the scent. He dashed off, keeping up a prolonged, deep baying, a sound dismal and weird to the uninitiated, but most musical to the thorough sportsman.

The track was fresh. Caleb and Mr. Upton divided, Mr. Upton going to the left while Caleb started to the right. Just beyond the second growth of beeches Caleb caught a glimpse of the fox, apparently making for a cover in the dense woods behind Cyrus Whitney's home. He followed quickly. When just in the rear of the barn he heard or thought he heard a shriek. He stopped a moment to locate the sound to see if it would be repeated. Again he heard it. It was an agonized cry. He hastened toward the barn, thinking it was from there that the sound had come. As he neared the barn he heard the cry, "Oh, Father!" then a sob. It sounded like Hilda's voice. Could Hilda be in trouble? Quick as a flash Caleb burst in the door. There he saw a sight which nearly froze the blood in his veins. On a beam above the central loft Cyrus Whitney hung

suspended by a rope around his neck. His long, lank figure stretched its full length. His eyes were almost bulging from their sockets. Hilda, who had climbed to the loft, was trying with all her strength to lift her father, that his weight should be off the rope. Taking in the situation at a glance Caleb hastily ascended the ladder and without a word to Hilda, climbed to the upright cross beam above, over which Cyrus had thrown the rope. Lying flat upon the beam, he placed one arm under the arms of Cyrus, while with his other hand he cut the rope. Then hanging head downward, he easily and gently lowered Cyrus down to the loft beneath, dropping down himself beside him. He loosened the rope and Cyrus lay as one dead at his feet. Then for the first time Hilda spoke.

"Oh Caleb!" she cried in her anguish, "is it too late—is he dead?"

"No, I think not. But run you, Hilda, for Doctor Sherman. Jump on your horse and bring him here at once. I will do what I can while you are gone. See! he is alive!" as Cyrus gave a gasp. "Go; don't fall!" Hilda needed no second bid-

ding. While Hilda's father had been close and hard with others, he had always been gentle, and for his hard nature, liberal with her. Hilda loved her father, loved him even more perhaps because she knew he had no other friend in the world. While Hilda hurried to Dr. Sherman's, Caleb worked his best over Mr. Whitney. He knew nothing about such cases. But his natural good sense told him he must do his best to get back the circulation which had almost if not entirely stopped, and when the doctor arrived, which he did very soon, as he happened to be at home, Cyrus had already shown signs of returning life. Soon after the doctor's skilful work he was able to walk to the house.

As they approached the house, Dr. Sherman remarked:

"There is no necessity of this getting about. We four are the only ones who know about it. Mr. Whitney himself will scarcely speak of it, and certainly Hilda will not. A doctor always has his secrets, and you, Caleb, I know we can depend upon you. But if inquiries are made, remember, Mr. Whitney had a shock. It will be no falsehood.

It certainly is a shock; to all of us in fact." Mr. Whitney was put to bed, and the doctor shortly joined Caleb in the sitting room.

"How is he now?" inquired Caleb.

"Oh, he will soon be asleep, and he will come out of this right enough. But he is a physical wreck; nerves all shattered, a weak heart and, if he lives long, a weak intellect, too, I fear. He can't live very long, however, naturally; and he must be watched that he doesn't attempt anything of the kind again. I am afraid his troubles have unbalanced his brain. But he must not die by his own hand, for his daughter's sake if for no other reason. His days are numbered, poor man. It must have been a terrible blow to him to see the fortune which he had been a life-time accumulating dwindle away to nothing in less than a year's time."

"Yes," answered Caleb. "It is a fearful lesson, yet he is not alone; and no matter how many lessons there are, there are still others left who think they can beat a man at his own game, and find out their folly only too late. I am glad he is improv-

ing; it would have been a terrible blow to Hilda to have him die this way."

"That is true," replied Dr. Sherman. "He laid his plans all right to have made a success of it. The only reason it was a failure was because he did not have the strength in his body to kick the plank from under him, and so was slowly strangling to death. However, I must be off. If you are going along I will give you a lift."

"No," answered Caleb, "I don't think I will go yet. I will wait and see Hilda. Perhaps I can do something for her, or give her some advice in regard to her father."

"Very well. But I would not talk too long today, old man; some other day."

So the doctor took his departure. Shortly after Hilda entered the room, her eyes red with weeping.

"You still here, Caleb?" she exclaimed. "How kind of you to stop, and what a blessing that you happened along! You have saved Father's life, and I don't know how to thank you. Oh! he feels so bad! He cried like a baby and said he had not a friend in the world. He said that he never knew

until today that even I, his own daughter, loved him. You see, we have never been very affectionate, and he really thought I had no love for him. But he knows now, and he is better for it. I told him that you were his friend, too. He could hardly believe it, but he wants to see you tomorrow, if you can spare the time."

"Certainly, I can run over tomorrow; in fact, I intended to, anyway."

"Do," said Hilda. "I am afraid," with hesitation, "that his affairs are badly mixed up. I think he wants your advice. Perhaps you have heard, as others have, that our home is heavily mortgaged?" Hilda added bravely, "and as you are a lawyer now you can help him in his affairs."

"I am a lawyer, that's a fact! I had forgotten all about it. You see I have not put my shingle out yet. I am waiting for the new block to be finished and shall then open an office in it. You tell your Father, Hilda, that this will be my first case, and for advertising purposes I won't charge anything. I believe that's the way the doctor did with one of his first cases, and I guess the advertisement paid, judging by the business he is doing now."

"You are very kind," said Hilda. "We don't want to impose on you, but I am afraid," falteringly, "there will not be much to pay any one with anyway. I don't believe Father has a dollar left."

Shortly after, Caleb arose to go and Hilda accompanied him to the door. Caleb reached in his pocket and drew out a roll of bills.

"Here, Hilda," he said, "take this for present uses." Seeing a look in Hilda's face of refusal he added before she could refuse, "You will need some money. You don't understand what it is to be without it, with no credit."

"No, no!" said Hilda, "not from you, don't ask me. I thank you just the same, but I cannot."

"But I insist," said Caleb. "You will need money. It is only a loan."

"A loan," replied Hilda, sadly. "And how can that loan be repaid, pray tell me?"

"I am your attorney now. It is no matter how bad shape a client's affairs are in, trust a lawyer for getting his share. You must take it. In fact you shall take it," and Caleb pressed the bills into her hand. He felt her fingers close upon the

money, and he knew that he felt, too, a pressure upon his own hand from hers.

Caleb was just descending the hill when he heard a loud "Hello!" Looking back he saw Mr. Upton approaching. He looked more closely and saw him holding up to view a fox.

"Isn't he a beauty?" he shouted.

"Yes," Caleb replied as the two came together. "Did he give you much of a run?"

"Indeed he did; a half dozen miles or more. Say, this dog is a great hunter. He started another one, but I confess I was too fagged out by the time I landed this one to follow the trail of a second. I heard the discharge of a gun shortly after and as the dog soon came back, I decided that you had shot it. But as I see you have no fox and in fact no gun,"—for Caleb in the recent excitement had forgotten even the start of the morning,—"probably some other hunter shot it ahead of the dog, for I am satisfied he would never leave a scent after once starting. But where in the world have you been?" So Caleb told him that Mr. Whitney had had a shock in the barn, and that as he happened to be passing the barn when

Hilda discovered her father, he had helped him into the house, and had stayed throughout the day with the doctor and Hilda.

"Poor Whitney!" Mr. Upton ejaculated. "I am very sorry for Hilda, dear girl. I am glad you happened along to assist them. But your day's sport has been spoiled, nevertheless. We must go again. I haven't enjoyed anything so for years. I'm so hungry, I could eat a bear."

## CHAPTER X.

### IN WHICH MANY THINGS HAPPEN.

The next day Caleb called at Mr. Whitney's and was met at the door by Hilda, who took him to her father, and then left them alone. Caleb was suprised at the change in Cyrus. He had always been tall, lank and lantern jawed. But now he seemed almost a living skeleton as he sat in the great armchair by the open fire, his eyes deep-sunken, and his voice,—that shrill squeaky voice, dreaded in the past by many,—was now so faint that he spoke with an effort, almost in a whisper. "The doctor was right," thought Caleb. "No need of this man taking his own life. God will do that very soon."

"How do you feel today, Mr. Whitney?" asked Caleb in a cheerful voice.

"Feeble, very feeble, Caleb. I have got some business to attend to and I guess I can't do it any

too soon. Be kind enough to bring me that large iron box over there, please. Looks prosperous don't it?" he added. "Well," with a sigh, "it has been. How much do you suppose I was worth, Caleb, twelve months ago?"

"I couldn't tell, sir," replied Caleb. "I have heard your wealth estimated anywhere from fifty to a hundred thousand."

"Oh! I don't like to think of it now," moaned Cyrus. "Twelve months ago I could have cleaned up a hundred and fifty thousand, today I have nothing. I don't care much for myself," he added, "it never did me much good. But Hilda, my daughter, she could have used it well, and now. But you won't let her come to want, Caleb, will you, after I am gone? Say that you won't," he moaned pitifully while the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Don't dwell on the past, Mr. Whitney, it's the future you want to look into. As for dear Hilda, she shall never want while I live. But let us see what we can save out of this wreck. It may not be as bad as you fear." Caleb opened the box which was full of papers neatly tied into separate

packages. Caleb looked through bundle after bundle: Rushton bills; receipted stocks; bonds, loans and notes; in fact the papers of years. Laying aside those which were paid or cancelled, he put together in one heap those he was to look over.

"There are a few stocks," said Cyrus, taking up a package, "most of my dealings were on margins. But I did buy a few cheap stocks outright. Now here's some oil stock. There is quite a block of it. It was only a few cents a share when I bought it. It's non-assessable; and non-sellable, too," he added with a sickly smile. "I have tried to sell it several times, but could never find another fool as big a fool as myself. It may be worth something some day. Keep it, anyhow, and once in a while look it up. Then here is some Klondike Gold Company. Sounds good, don't it?" taking up the papers. "I am supposed to be part owner in several acres of land somewhere in Alaska, if the company is still alive. You might possibly hear from that some day. Put that aside too, and keep track of it. Though the two together ain't worth the paper they are written on in all proba-

bility." So they went on through the papers; there was indeed little left of apparent value. They talked over the mortgage and the several attachments against the estate, Caleb giving Cyrus such encouragement as he could, leaving him at last, with a load lifted from his poor distracted brain.

Hilda was sitting by the window in the sitting room, when Caleb entered the room, engaged with some kind of fancy work. The work had fallen in her lap and she sat with her elbow on the window sill gazing out at the beautiful view beyond. The setting sun threw a few parting rays across her beautiful hair. The snow which covered the hills beyond, formed a background of virgin purity. Hilda herself with a sad look on her face, but with the roses still in her cheeks formed a picture never to be forgotten. Caleb never realized before how beautiful she really was. Her laughter had ever been a pleasant sound to Caleb's ears. Now she was in trouble, and he had never seen her sorrowful before. There was a new look in her face, and he thought if anything it enhanced her beauty.

He stood gazing in silent admiration; and Hilda, as if she felt his gaze, turned and said,

"Oh! is it you, Caleb? And are you through with business?"

"Yes," Caleb replied. "I think so, for today. Now, Hilda, I will tell you what we have decided to do. I think you ought to know because I do not think your father will be with you long."

"Oh, do you think it must come so soon?" she asked in alarm.

"Yes, I do. I thought it best to tell you. Now, in a word, I will be as brief as possible. There are a few things that must be attended to at once. In the first place the interest on the mortgage is due and must be paid. Then there are several attachments upon the property which tie up everything. You can't dispose of anything if you wish to. Moreover, these claims, your father says, are just, and should be paid. We think it best to pay them at once, thus to stop further costs. That is the first thing to be done. The amount is not large." Caleb did not tell Hilda that it would take several hundred dollars to accomplish this. "And I have offered the necessary amount to your father. I

was willing to take his note for the amount." (Caleb knew that the note would be worth nothing.) "But he insists on my taking a second mortgage as security. I dislike to do this, but as he will not allow me to advance it on any other terms, I have agreed to do it with your permission."

"But Caleb," answered Hilda, "I don't know much about business and mortgages, but I have heard that our place was mortgaged for all it is worth, how then can your money be secured? I cannot let you take chances of losing your hard earned money to save our disgrace."

"Oh, I shall not be taking any chances," he replied, although he knew the great risk full well. "You see the second mortgagee is like the lawyer, he doesn't get left. Often times in order to protect himself if he sees that he is really to stand a loss on a forced sale, he buys in the first mortgage." Caleb did not, however, tell her that he could not protect himself in this way; that he did not have ready money enough to buy in the first mortgage.

"If you are sure, Caleb, that you are taking no chances and if you think this the best way out of

our difficulties, I will do as you say. I put perfect trust in you, Caleb."

"Thank you, Hilda, it is good of you to say so. I hope I can prove faithful to the trust."

"I am sure you can," she replied. "How good you are to Father."

"Your father, Hilda?" said Caleb, coming over to where she stood by the mantel, "not your father, Hilda,—but to you! Could I see this beautiful home taken from you? Could I see all these tokens and knickknacks sold at public auction to strangers? Could I see you cast adrift? You, who were brought up in wealth and abundance? No, no, Hilda, every article in this house is dear to you, and being dear to you it is dear to me. Hilda, dear, I have not got to tell you how I love you! You know it already; you must have known it all these years."

"Oh! don't Caleb!" she cried. "Don't! not now; wait, wait until—"

"Until when, Hilda dear? Have I not been waiting all these years? Have I not been waiting ever since we were school children together for this day? For the day when I could ask you to

be my wife. Why wait longer? You will never need a protector as you do now. Let me be your protector; your husband! Tell me, Hilda," he pleaded, "do you love another?"

"No, I love no one," she answered. "No one" —and in a low voice, "but you."

"Hilda!" He had taken her in his arms now, into his great strong arms, and she nestled there, trembling like a frightened bird. Caleb had waited for years for this day, hoping always that no one could steal her heart until he would make his way in the world: he was already fairly started on the road to position and wealth. He knew she loved him; he knew she had loved him all these years; she, the dearest, most beautiful girl in the whole country. Long he held her in his embrace while he rained kisses upon her lips, her cheek, her hair. At last Hilda sobbed, "Not now, Caleb. No, not yet. You have my love: let that be enough. I can't marry you while in our present position. I can't blast all your hopes for the future. Caleb, I love you too well for that. In the future; in the years to come if you still love me, come to me again." She was crying now.

Caleb drew her head down on his broad shoulder, while he stroked her hair and told her over again, the old, old story. That he had hoped and prayed, too, aye, prayed that one day she should be his, that he had worked and struggled for her alone, and now that she was in trouble and distress should he wait? "No, no! Hilda! Give me your answer now. It must be 'yes.' It shall be 'yes'!" And Hilda? Did she say "yes?" Could she help saying it?

When Caleb at last bade her good night the sun had long since gone down in a blaze of glory leaving a soft and mellow twilight. Caleb strolled home with a gladness in his heart, whistling merrily for companion's sake, to tell the dearest mother in the world that he had won the sweetest and most beautiful woman in all Rushton for his wife.

* * * * *

Town meeting day had arrived, the greatest day of the year in a country village; the one day in the year when the entire male population turns out. This is the day when the thrifty farmer takes a day off for a holiday. He feels that he is entitled

to this day, no matter how much there is to be done at home. The town needs him there; perhaps to save the town! They can't get along without him. Silas, and Peleg, Reuben and Zeke, Deacon and Parson, in fact all the citizens of the township meet together; and gossip, too. The meeting begins. Some one jumps up and shouts, "Mr. Moderator!" and then he sits down again feeling that he has saved the day. When Peleg arrives at home he tells his good wife, Dorcus, that if it hadn't been for him the town would have appropriated a hundred dollars toward forming a Board of Health. Silas boasts how he made the best speech of the day when he "shut 'em off on raisin' the road agent's pay." Each thinks he does his duty. Town meeting is the beginning of many a political career.

Caleb himself was just starting on his career, and he felt it his duty to be on hand early with the rest to stay all day. Not that he was afraid of the outcome of the election. He had been nominated for selectman without opposition. He was practically assured of being elected a member of the Honorable Board. But there were many articles

in the town warrant in which he was interested. Caleb spoke well; he possessed one of those clear, deep penetrating voices which carries weight with an audience, and he knew there would be much opposition to some of the articles. One of these articles read as follows: "Article Four:—To see if the town will build a concrete sidewalk, on the westerly side of main street, beginning at the new depot and running northerly, six hundred feet more or less to the junction of main street and the village centre and to appropriate money for the same." Caleb himself had this article inserted in the warrant. In a bright and snappy speech he hoped the town would see fit to build the sidewalk. He told them that this, the proposed sidewalk, was much needed; that it would be used in fact by every inhabitant in town; that it passed by the two new blocks recently erected, in which were located the principal stores and offices of the town, as well as by the post office; and that it was also the direct and travelled way to the depot. No sooner had Caleb sat down, then half a dozen arose with a shout of "Mr. Moderator!" The

moderator, however, announced that Silas Hobbs had the floor; and Silas Hobbs had his say.

"Mr. Moderator!" he began, "I'm agin' city improvements. I'm agin' spending money for city improvements! I want to know, Mr. Moderator, what we farmers want of concrete sidewalks? Our fathers, an' our grandfathers 'afore us, warn't afraid to walk on ploughed ground, an' I ain't nuther. I'd sooner the town would 'propriate the money to stamp out hog cholera."

"Mr. Moderator," replied Caleb, "I am sorry Mr. Hobbs objects to concrete sidewalks, and prefers ploughed ground. I think myself that his feet might get sore treading concrete sidewalks; they are not as soft as ploughed ground. But then he would get used to it in time. If he missed the rocks and stubble when on the sidewalk, he could carry a few stones in his pockets and drop them ahead of himself to stub his toe upon and remind him of old times."

The laugh was on Silas. "And I was not aware, Mr. Moderator, that Mr. Hobbs was afflicted with hog cholera." The laugh was again on Silas. "Pardon me, Mr. Moderator, perhaps I should have said that I was not aware that Mr. Hobbs'

hogs were afflicted with hog cholera." Up jumped Peleg Bronsdon; Silas Hobbs was thoroughly quashed.

"Mr. Moderator, I don't think anyone's got any right to come here and accuse Silas Hobbs of having hog cholera. We all know Brother Hobbs; an' we all know his hogs. The question is, shall the town build this sidewalk? I say no!" he thundered, "a hundred times, no! As Silas says, our fathers an' our gran'fathers have walked through mud an' slush over this same sidewalk for a hundred years, and if 'twas good 'nough for them, it's good 'nough for me. We're getting a lot of new fangled notions in town; an' the next thing they'll want will be 'lectric lights or some other city improvement."

Caleb answered Peleg's argument and several others. When the question was at last put and the hands counted, Caleb had won. The town of Rushton entered a new career with its first public improvement. Caleb was also elected selectman, and not only was he elected, but elected by the highest vote of the three, which according to rules previously established, made him chairman of the board.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PASSING OF SHYLOCK WHITNEY.

During the past winter Doctor Sherman had been very busy. There was a great deal of sickness in town, as there usually is around hog-killing time, when the under-fed farmers gorge themselves on pork as long as it lasts and then wonder what's the matter with them. Dr. Sherman's skill was well known and his fame fast spreading; he was frequently called away on some difficult case, or in consultation with some other physician.

Old Dr. Higgins had given up his practice entirely. "I suppose I have money enough to last Betsie and me as long as we live, and have a little left over," he told Dr. Sherman. "I am getting lazy, too, and I don't see any reason why I should be going out, when I have to call you in, anyhow. You seem to have got the confidence of all the people hereabouts, and so I guess I will retire and

enjoy life for the rest of my time. I never thought I could enjoy life with that confounded rheumatism working all over me, but now that you have cured me of it, Sherman, I think I can take some pleasure, poking around the garden and calling on old friends."

"I heard a joke once," replied Dr. Sherman, "in regard to rheumatism, that I thought pretty good. It seems there was an old man who had suffered for years with rheumatism and had tried every known remedy without obtaining any relief. One day he was sitting by the window suffering from pain more than usual, when a sudden twinge caused him to jump. He kicked his leg clear through the window, and the pane was gone."

"That's good!" roared the old doctor. "No wonder your patients get well, with your bright, sunny ways and always a pleasant word. I believe these count for more cures than your medicine."

"Perhaps so," replied Dr. Sherman, "but there is one subject I am serious about, and that is consumption. There must be a cure for it, if it could only be found; and I mean to discover it if there is such a cure. Strange that, with all our science and

new discoveries, someone has not yet found a cure for this dread disease."

"Yes, it is strange," answered Dr. Higgins. "I think myself that it will be discovered some time, but it won't be in my day, and I am afraid not in yours, Sherman."

Dr. Sherman, though busy, found time to call frequently at Mr. Upton's new home, where he was always welcome. Mr. Upton had taken a great fancy to him and Marjorie herself seemed pleased to see him. He knew that he was making little if any progress in his love affair. But he hoped against hope that the day would come when she would forget Caleb and turn to him. It had been a terrible blow to Marjorie when she heard of Caleb's engagement to Hilda. She was glad for Hilda's sake that she had found such a true and noble love; she had tried, moreover, to make herself think that she was fast forgetting her own love for Caleb. But now that she knew he was lost to her, she felt that she still loved him, although she tried bravely to hide her feelings from her father and the world. She succeeded in deceiving all, except Dr. Sherman. He knew that way down

deep in her heart she still loved Caleb, and it caused him great pain. Why could he not have the love of this beautiful girl? He would have it he vowed. In time she must forget. He would wait. Yes, he would wait for years for the love of such a girl as Marjorie. But would Marjorie live for years? There were the seeds of that dread disease in her system. He knew it, although he tried hard to deceive himself into believing otherwise. But her listless ways, her pale cheeks, and those blue veins! Occasionally he had noticed the flush on her cheek, which was not the flush of health, and lately she had a dry cough that every time he heard it caused a pain in himself like a knife wound. Dr. Sherman had advised Mr. Upton to take a trip to the south or west the past winter, but Marjorie did not wish to leave her beautiful home and they had remained in Rushton.

One day in early spring, after the doctor had called at Mr. Upton's, Marjorie herself accompanied him to the door. It was one of those cold, raw days of easterly winds and drizzling rain that cut like a knife and seem to penetrate everywhere. The doctor was just bidding her goodbye and ad-

vising her to stay indoors today, when she started to reply, but a coughing fit, more violent than he had ever heard her have, seized her. Hastily raising her handkerchief to her lips, a fine gauzy affair, the doctor's quick eye discerned a small dark red stain.

"Goodbye, Miss Upton," he said abruptly, and strode down the driveway. "Oh, God!" he cried to himself, "she must not die! She must not die! Oh! this fearful, deadly, lingering disease, that baffles all the medical fraternity! There must be some cure: there shall be some cure for it, and I will find it. I will devote all my time to it. It must be found quickly, too. Oh, Marjorie!" he wailed, "wait! Give me time, my darling. I will find it, only give me time." On he strode down the drive, through the lane, and along the highway, the rain beating on his face, the winds howling about him, thinking, dreading, praying. He was like a mad man. He observed nothing, thought of nothing, except Marjorie and the awful disease which was sapping her beautiful young life away.

* * * * *

Rushton was indeed booming. The new blocks were finished, and were an immediate addition to an attractive town. In one of the blocks were located the new Boston Branch Grocery store and the new market. Cow meat was now a relic of by-gone days in Rushton. A millinery store was on the second floor with the offices of various business concerns. The Rushton Board of Trade occupied one; the Real Estate syndicate another; the Rushton Granite Company still another, with Jack Stevens for manager. The large front office was occupied by Caleb, who had now his shingle out, a new handsome sign reading as follows: "Caleb Abbott, Attorney at Law, Justice of the Peace. Notary Public, Real Estate, Insurance and Mortgages." In the other block was a new dry goods store, and the post office. The greater part of the second floor was taken up with a fine large hall, with its dressing rooms, which was soon to be occupied by a new lodge of Odd Fellows. Old Skinner's leather cart was a thing of the past in Rushton. He had located now in Weed Village, where they still hankered for tuberculosis cows and bob veal. Poor Lucinda French had retired

on her pension. No more would she comment on Cynthia McDonald's love letters. By the way, Cynthia was long since married to her "best feller down to Manchester." She had gone down there to work in the mills, to support him. Old Kettchum still "hung out," but the days of his hotel were numbered. A fine, new, modern building was now in the process of construction for a hotel. Poor Kettchum had been soaked fifty dollars twice within a year by the L. P. O. G. T. League, who were getting poor and being in need of money saw a good opportunity of getting it. Hiram still came around with fish. Rushton could not yet get along without Hiram, his genial smile, and pleasant word for all. Libby, the stage driver, was driving the depot carriage, and had bought a new horse which he said was fast. "Could go inside a mile in three minutes." The concrete sidewalk had been built, with edgestone from the Rushton Granite Company. In fact the sidewalk was used by everyone in town except by Silas Hobbs, who still walked in the middle of the street on his way to and from the post office. "I've never had a corn or bunion yet; and by gosh! I

ain't agoin' to, if I can help it. So, I'll keep off the darned, old, concrete sidewalk," he remarked.

Through Caleb, Rushton boasted of an ice plant, perhaps the only one of its kind in New Hampshire. One night during a meeting of the Board of Trade Caleb proposed starting an ice plant for the benefit of all. He would allow a house to be built upon his land on the shore of the little pond which was made by the dams at the mill; he would furnish lumber at cost to build the same. He promised the sawdust, and allowed the use of his horses free. Then he proposed forming a company to cover the cost, which would be in the neighborhood of three hundred dollars, by issuing shares, twenty shares at ten dollars each, to be preferred stock, and twenty shares at five dollars each as common stock. The preferred stock was to be issued to those who did not care to or were not able to work getting in the ice, and they were to be paid for in cash. The twenty shares at five dollars a share were to be issued to the middle and poorer classes, who were allowed to work out the price, at the rate of one dollar and fifty cents a day; or two and a half days' work for their five-dollar

share. They could do this work either in the construction of the house or in the cutting or getting in of the ice. Each holder of stock could obtain ice free for their own family use. To those who wished ice, and had no shares in the company, ice was to be sold at the rate of fifteen cents a hundred and this money was to be the dividend each year. As there would be no cost after the house was built there must be a dividend each year. Caleb's plan met with instant approval and the plant was established. A good plan for some other small village to adopt.

Other buildings were being erected all over the village. The Granite Company was doing a big business, employing several hands. The pulp mill was running overtime. The directors had put in a dynamo and were supplied with electric lights. Next year there would probably be an article in the town warrant to raise the money for electric lights. Caleb's saw-mill was pushed to its utmost capacity. A new woolen mill had been built just below Rushton, whose employees lived mostly in the town. Rushton was indeed fast putting on the ways of a country city. The town was growing

fast, and Caleb was growing with it, and helping it grow.

Cyrus Whitney had lingered all winter, growing weaker and weaker. He seemed to hang on to life as he had hung on to everything else he had gotten hold of. One afternoon when it seemed as if he could not live through the day Hilda came in and sat by his side. Poor Cyrus! the hard, cold man of the world at last realized that there was something else to live for besides money. Stroking his daughter's hair he said:

"Hilda, I think you had better send for the parson tomorrow. I never believed much in church, but I guess there is something in it after all. Anyway, I know you will feel better to have him come. Not that it would do me much good," he added, as if ashamed to give in. "But perhaps it's better so. I have been called a hard man, Hilda, but your poor old Father never did a crime. I guess I've lived pretty near the ten commandments even if I didn't go to church. I have always been honest, Hilda. I have never cheated. I've always lived within the law, and if I have charged some a pretty high rate of interest that's their

fault. They never would have come to Old Shylock for money if they could have got it anywhere else."

"No, Father, I don't think you have broken any laws. Perhaps it would be better to have the parson come over. I hope you will be with us a long time yet. But it can do no harm to have him come."

"Hilda, after he has been here you might send over a barrel of potatoes to the parsonage; 'taters are high now, and I guess he can use them all right. We've got enough to carry us through."

"Yes, Father, I think he would appreciate them."

"And, Hilda, I'm rather glad now that you and Caleb and the Upton girl and the doctor have kept up that Thanksgiving business. I suppose there are some people that find it hard to get along. By the way, Hilda, I haven't seen Caleb lately. He ain't away, is he?"

"Oh, no! Father," answered Hilda. "There is nothing for him to come for now. Besides he is very busy. If you want him I will send for him to come."

"Well, I wish you would. Tell him to drop in in a day or two, I would like to see him. I like that boy. He's a wonder, and already a selectman. He makes me think of myself in my younger day. They used to call me a hustler then, though I guess the boy ain't quite as close as I used to be."

"No," replied Hilda, "I have heard it said that he is very liberal."

"I often thought," continued her father, "that he liked this little girl of mine pretty well and that this little girl used to like him. I rather hoped lately that, well that there might be something in it."

"Would you be pleased if there was, Father?" asked Hilda sweetly.

"My dear girl, nothing would please me more. I could die happy then if I knew my daughter would be taken care of by such a big, strong and honest fellow as Caleb."

"Father," Hilda spoke gently, "Caleb has asked me to be his wife."

"And you, Hilda? You haven't refused him?" anxiously asked her father.

"No, but neither have I really promised. But

there is an understanding between us," replied Hilda, blushing.

"Thank God, I can die happy now. Hilda, I want some singing when I am being laid away, and a plain funeral. If there is anything left after I am gone, or if those stocks should ever pay, I shouldn't mind if you should give something to the poor."

"Yes, father, but you are getting tired. Let me fix your pillow, then you must go to sleep." So Hilda, having deftly arranged the pillows, and kissed her father goodnight, stole softly out of the room.

The next day the parson came over. He came none too soon. A few days later when Hilda went in to see her father, he lay asleep with a smile on his face and her picture in his hand. She stole softly to the bed to draw the clothes closer around him, accidentally touching his hand. It was so cold that she started with a little cry, and leaning over him she whispered, "Father!" She could not hear him breathe. Could it be possible; was he dead?

Yes, Cyrus Whitney would breathe no more. His weak heart had refused to work longer, and he had gone to his God. In the world beyond he would be judged. Hilda drew the sheet over his face, and hurried out to tell Mary to go to Mrs. Abbott's at once for Caleb. She then went to her own room, there to be alone with her grief.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MR. UPTON BECOMES YOUNG AGAIN.

The day after the funeral Mr. Upton had driven over after Hilda. "Marjorie wants you to come and visit her," he had said. "She is not feeling very bright, and she wishes to see you. It must be lonely here for you now." Hilda went back with him, where amidst new scenes and with Marjorie, her dear friend, she could forget her new, keen sorrow.

Mr. Upton had been a frequent caller at the Abbott's and although he pretended to run over to see Caleb he usually called when he knew Caleb would be away. As Marjorie had Hilda for company now he thought he would run in for a moment. Caleb was not at home. Still he did not seem to feel disappointed, neither was he in a hurry to go. It was about nine o'clock on that bright June day, and the Widow Abbott had just

finished her morning's work. She was busily engaged in putting the milk pans in their rack outside the door, when Mr. Upton came into the yard.

"Good morning, Mrs. Abbott," he said. "Is Caleb at home?"

"No," she answered with a smile. "Don't you remember he told you yesterday that he was obliged to run down to the county building today on a legal matter?"

"Oh! so he did. I am getting very forgetful," he said, as he seated himself on the bench near the door. "You are always working, Mrs. Abbott," he added. "Don't you ever get tired of work?"

"Oh, no! Why should I? I have always worked. I don't have any too much to do now, just enough to keep me busy." She had just set another pan in the rack, which was so bright and shiny that it reflected her face almost as well as a looking glass. Mr. Upton sat with one leg carelessly dangling over the bench, sitting in such a way that he could see Mrs. Abbott without her knowing that he was looking at her. He sat studying her as if she were a young girl of eigh-

teen, commenting to himself, "She's plump, and her arm is clear and pretty yet." He thought, "There are not many lines of care on her face, her hair, though nearly white, is very becoming around such a healthy face. I can still see the roguish twinkle in her eye, too! I'll bet if I challenged her for a race now she'd do it the same as she used to at school; and she'd beat me, too! I wonder if she'd take the stump for a 'teedle-bend-os,' if there were any ice," and he laughed aloud.

"Will you tell me, Mr. Upton," she asked, "what you find to laugh about?"

"Yes, I will, Mattie, excuse me, Mrs. Abbott, I was thinking of that day at school when you stumped me to go across the pond, teedle-bend-os, and how you got across all right, and how I went through up to my waist, and was wondering if you would stump me now."

Mrs. Abbott was laughing herself now. "So you remember that, do you, Sa—Mr. Upton? I am afraid the ice would have to be pretty thick to hold you up. But I often think of those days and wish I could live them over."

"Do you think of me," he asked, "when thinking of those days?"

"Of course I do," she replied. "Were you not always there? How could I think of those days without thinking of you, too?" The conversation was drifting dangerously near something like sentiment. Mr. Upton felt bashful. How could he ask her to marry him? He had made up his mind to ask her to be his wife some time ago, yet he always went home saying to himself, "Well, I'll have it over with, tomorrow."

"What are you going to do, Mrs. Abbott," he inquired, "if I am not too personal, when Caleb gets married?"

"Oh," she replied with a sigh, "I suppose I shall run the farm just the same; our man, John, is a good worker, and I guess we can get along. Caleb wants me to live with him, and insists that I do. But I believe in letting the young folks have their own way when they get married. I don't believe in 'mothers-in-law!' "

"The idea of your being in the way!" said Mr. Upton. "They would be glad to have you with them."

"Yes, I really think they would, but I have set opinions on the mother-in-law business. No matter how pleasant and well liked you are before, after marriage the mother-in-law is always in the way."

"Sit down, Mattie," he said, "I have a proposition to make to you." Mrs. Abbott came and sat down beside him. "How would you like to be my housekeeper?" he blurted out.

"Oh, Mr. Upton, I could not be that; Caleb would not let me work for pay, even if I wanted to, and there is no necessity for it, either."

"I don't mean that. I didn't mean to pay you." Still that wasn't just the way he meant to put it, either.

"Didn't mean to pay me!" she exclaimed indignantly. "What did you think, Samuel Upton? That I was homeless, and you simply meant to offer me a home?"

"Yes, that's what I meant," he answered. "I simply offered you a home."

"Well, I am surprised," she said rising. "I really—I feel it an insult, Mr. Upton. I don't know what to say to you, but Caleb would be very

much provoked if he knew that you offered me a home."

"You don't understand, Mattie, I mean—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"I want to give you a home. I want you to be my wife." There! it was over, and he felt relieved.

"Your wife? You mean that an old woman like me, a hard-working country woman like me, mistress in your grand house? Samuel Upton, you are crazy!" Still she felt flattered and came and sat beside him again.

"No, Mattie," he exclaimed, "I'm not crazy. I love you as well as a man of my years can love. You are not an old woman. You are not as old as I, and I feel young yet. I can give you all there is to want for in this world, and can make you happy, I know. You won't have to work: only to superintend the servants. And Marjorie loves you as she would her own mother. She is not very well," he added sadly. "She needs a mother's care. Perhaps I am selfish in asking you, but I want you not only for my sake but partly for Marjorie's, too."

"I don't know what to say," she answered. "I love Marjorie, and I would like to be with her and help her back to health. But this is so sudden. I would like to think it over."

"Why think it over, Mattie?" he said, taking one of her hands in his. "You usually think quickly. Why not give me an answer now?"

"I don't know—I—I—"

"There now," he said, "don't cry," and reaching down he kissed her.

"Don't, Sam," she exclaimed, "don't! There comes John; he must have seen you!" In fact John, who was just coming around the barn, did see them, but John was wise and he was human, too, so he sneaked back again out of sight.

"Did John see me, do you think?" he asked.

"Yes, he did. I know he did. How could he have helped it?"

"Well, I am glad he did, because you will have to say 'yes' now. How would you feel when John tells somebody that he saw Mr. Upton kissing Mrs. Abbott out in the back yard? That will never do to get around the village, will it?"

"Now you are taking a mean advantage of me,"

answered Mrs. Abbott. "I'll have to give in, I suppose; that is, after I see what Caleb says. But I must go in now. You'd better go home, Sam. Come over in a day or two, and see Caleb."

"Give me a kiss before I go, Mattie."

"No, I won't either. Suppose John is looking."

"Well, I won't press you now, Mattie. But say, I really think you are getting your second youth. When you blushed that time you looked like a young girl."

"There! you run along home, Sam!" she replied. "You act just as you used to at school." So he went. He always used to go when Mattie told him to, at school, and he supposed he would have to do as she said now.

"Won't Marjorie be pleased!" he thought, as he crossed the meadow.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DR. SHERMAN'S QUEST.

Dr. Sherman, since the day he had left Marjorie in the rain, had been working incessantly to discover if possible a cure for lung troubles. He had fitted up a little laboratory off of his office. Night after night he worked over the problem without any satisfactory results. He would breakfast in the morning, make his daily calls, then hurry home again, and if there were no urgent cases, throw himself on his bed and snatch a few hours' sleep.

"You will wear yourself out, Sherman," Dr. Higgins would say. "You are too young a man to throw your life away. Let it alone; let some one who has more time on his hands make this discovery."

"No, I can't wait," he would reply. "I must find it, and find it soon. I think I am making some progress; but it is slow work, and there is

nothing sure. I must have some animals to try it on."

"I don't like it," his good wife, Betsie, would say. "It don't seem right to torture the poor little creatures."

"I don't torture them, Mrs. Higgins," the doctor would reply. "I haven't tried it on them yet, and when I do, it will only make them sick. Then I shall try and cure them. If I fail I will put them painlessly out of their sickness. But even if I should torture one hundred or two hundred pigs and rabbits, and save one human life, don't you think the end justifies the means?"

"Yes, perhaps you are right," replied the good woman. "But you are ruining your health, sitting up nights."

"No, I don't think so," he said. "It takes a good deal to break down a strong, healthy young man like me. I know that to you who have the simple, country habits, to bed at eight and up at five, it seems as if we could not stand it. But I could tell you of cases in my college days, of young men, some of them of not over strong constitutions either, who would be out night after night and

all night long dissipating, playing poker, perhaps, in a close, smoky room. Yet they studied all day and seldom broke down. It's the excitement that keeps them up. I'll admit it's bad for the nerves, however."

"Well, you are of age and you're your own boss, so we can't interfere," replied Dr. Higgins. "But do try and get some sleep."

Toward winter he had made progress enough to try the remedy upon animals. He had offered the boys of the village twenty-five cents apiece for every live rabbit they would bring him. The boys were doing a big business and you could go nowhere in the woods or through the swamps without coming across box traps of every description. Many a fight there was that winter when some Bill would discover his traps empty and accuse a Jim of swiping his rabbits.

Marjorie did not improve. Mr. Upton decided to take her to New Mexico for a change during the winter. The doctor had insisted that she must go. The New England winters were too severe for her constitution, and so, at last, much against her own inclination, Marjorie promised to go.

Mr. Upton had talked with Caleb, who was pleased that his mother's future was so well provided for. "It is just as she says," said Caleb. "We shall be quite a happy family here in Rushton."

As Mr. Upton and Marjorie were going West it was arranged to have the wedding before they went. It was just a quiet home wedding. Mrs. Abbott was dressed in a tailor made traveling suit of soft color. No one except the parson was nervous in the least. He, poor man, had never even attended a wedding amidst such elegant surroundings, and he was so busy gazing at the beautiful bric-a-brac with which the house was filled that he almost forgot where he was in the service. When the ceremony was over and Mr. Upton, receiving his congratulations, took the parson's hand and left shining in it a hundred dollars in gold, the good parson nearly fainted.

"I think you have made a mistake, Mr. Upton," he at last managed to say. "We don't get but two dollars here in the country."

"My good man," answered Mr. Upton, "if I had been married in New York the flowers alone would have cost more than that, and here I have

had no cost at all. Take it, it is not too much, and in the future, when I return, we shall see what we can do to fix up the parsonage a little."

A day or two before they left for New Mexico Dr. Sherman called professionally on Marjorie. He told her that no matter how homesick she felt she must stay until the winter was over at the north. "Don't return before April," he said, "and if you can stay until June it will be better for you. I am more interested than you think, Miss Upton, in your health," he added. "I love you, Marjorie. I have loved you ever since that Thanksgiving night."

"Please don't, Doctor Sherman."

"Wait, Marjorie, let me finish. Ever since that sleigh ride which was the beginning of happiness in my life, I have known that your heart was given to another. No," he went on, as she looked at him in astonishment, "no one told me. I saw it myself. I want you to get well. I want you to forget that love, which is lost to you now. I want you to get well and strong, and learn to love me, if you can. I will wait. Only tell me that I may hope."

"Doctor," she answered, "you surprise me very much. I did not know. I never even guessed that you loved me; that you thought of me more than a friend."

"But I do, Marjorie dear. You are all the world to me. I don't ask for your hand now. I am willing to wait, to wait until the old wound is healed. Yes, wait for years, if I can call you mine. Promise me that you will think of me when you are gone. Think of me, working day and night that I may effect a cure for you; that I may see you well and strong."

"Oh, doctor, you are so good! You hurt me. Don't say any more, please. I will think of you. I do like you very much. If I get well again who knows. I will try, try to forget."

"Then there is some hope for me, Marjorie?" he exclaimed, his face lighting up. "May I—?" he asked, taking up her delicate, small, white hand; and, before she could refuse him he kissed it. He knew he had no right to expect more, yet the remembrance of that day lasted as long as he lived. Marjorie, with a sad smile, said, "Go now, please. Come and see us off, won't you?"

"Certainly, Marjorie. Goodbye, for the present."

The first week in November Mr. and Mrs. Upton and Marjorie left for New Mexico. The day they started was one of those rare Indian Summer days. The grass was as green as in early spring, and the cattle, still in the pasture, looked up as if in sympathy as they saw the little party drive by. The fields were full of Indian corn shocked but not yet housed. Each shock looked like an Indian wigwam in the bright sunlight. Here and there were crows hurrying back and forth to form in one great colony for their journey south. It was summer to all appearances, yet by the calendar the winter was almost here. Marjorie looked at the familiar scenes as they drove along. She was much attached to Rushton and all its nature. Even now she felt homesick, but with a brave heart she joined in the conversation. Hilda drove to the station with Caleb to see them off. The doctor also came to the depot for a farewell. Mary Fleming came also to bid her goodbye, as the doctor had mentioned to her that Marjorie was going away. In her hand she carried a

bunch of wild purple asters which she had discovered in a corner of the field and Marjorie wore them at her belt as she started out upon her long journey.

The Uptons took a southern route, and Marjorie in the new scenes enjoyed everything. In such comfort did they travel that the journey did not weary her much. For Mrs. Upton, who had never been away from Rushton in her life, the trip was a revelation. Mr. Upton, giving so much pleasure to others, was as happy as a school boy. After arriving in New Mexico they decided to stop at Las Vegas. There, amid new scenes and surroundings, together with the clear, pure air, they hoped to see an improvement in Marjorie. She had a small Indian pony to ride, but the rides tired her so that she would sit for a large part of the time out doors or wander around the town, looking with curiosity at the mud houses or laughing at the antics of the Indian boys, or perhaps studying the gay colors worn by the Mexicans and cowboys. Still she wished she was back in Rushton. Why was it that when she thought of Rushton she always seemed to see Dr. Sher-

man? And as she saw him it was as if in a vision. It did not seem to be the doctor; but some one more serious. He seemed tired, overworked, sad; not the bright, happy, active man she had known. As the winter wore away, she thought of him more and more, and longed to see him. She did not seem to improve; the cough had disappeared, but with that exception she felt the same constant tiredness. Toward spring Marjorie began to count the days until she could go home. One day when she felt more than usually tired and had not left her room, her father and her mother had come to cheer her up.

"Oh, Papa," Marjorie exclaimed, "take me home. I don't want to stay here. I am going to die. Don't cry, Papa. But you can't hide it from me. I have seen the look on your face so often I know how you love me, and you too, Mother," she went on in a wild way. "But it is God's will. I don't want to die here. It is almost spring. Take me home. I want to smell the Mayflowers once again. I want to hear the robins sing. Oh, Papa, I am so lonesome. I want to see Hilda and

Caleb, and the doctor, and all our friends. Everything is so strange here."

"Yes, Marjorie, dear, we will go home," her father replied, chokingly. The tears would come, though manlike he tried hard to keep them back. "Spring is almost here. I will write to Sherman and find out what the weather is in Rushton. You are not going to die. Don't talk so, Marjorie. We will be at home soon."

During all this winter Dr. Sherman had been working in his laboratory. He had tried his remedy on rabbit and guinea pig alike; they all sickened, but do as he would he could not cure them. Still he would not give up. He was making some progress; he felt sure of that. He was not much like the gay, young doctor of a year ago; poor Mrs. Higgins was very much worried. He would throw himself into an easy chair and doze off perhaps for a few minutes, but then jump up again and go to work. Sleepless nights and sleepless days were telling on him, yet he would not give up. Was he not fighting for a life, fighting as if he were rescuing some one from drowning? Would he give up and lose his hold on a

drowning man simply because he was tired? No. So he kept at it, until one day towards April, when into the room where Mrs. Higgins and the old doctor sat, he rushed like a mad man, his shirt sleeves rolled up, his hair dishevelled, wild-eyed, and screaming:

"I have found it! I have found it! My pigs are getting better."

"Good Lord! Sherman, sit down. Betsie, run and get a cup of coffee for him." And Betsie who had been reading the Christian Herald, dropped it and her glasses as well, to hasten to the kitchen.

"Now, Sherman, if you have recovered your better senses, sit down and compose yourself. But first you better take a little valerian for your nerves."

"No, doctor, I don't want anything for my nerves. I am all right now. My pigs are getting well."

"Suppose they are getting well. What the devil do I care about your pigs?"

"But I do," said Dr. Sherman. "It makes all the difference in the world to me whether my pigs

get well or not. It means the most beautiful girl in this world for my wife."

"Well, by thunder! you are crazy, and no mistake. I knew what this might bring you to. Stop it, drop it, before it is too late." But Dr. Sherman had calmed down now, and when Betsie returned with the coffee, he related all that he had done. He also told the dear old couple of his love for Marjorie. Taking up his hat finally he arose with:

"But I must be off now. I have a case. The Daly girl, you remember. She is very sick with lung trouble. I shall try my remedy upon her. It can do her no harm, and if she improves, if it cures her, it will cure all such cases."

"I wish you success, Sherman," replied Dr. Higgins as he departed. "If it is a go, you will be the most famous man of the age, and your fortune is made."

The Daly girl did improve, and rapidly. In fact she improved so rapidly that Dr. Sherman was sure he had at last discovered the secret that medical men for a hundred years had been trying to solve. A few days before Mr. Upton had decided to write him Dr. Sherman dispatched a telegram which

read like this: "Samuel Upton, —— Hotel, Las Vegas, New Mexico. Have discovered a cure. Shall I come to you, or will you come to me?" Mr. Upton, not wishing to give Marjorie false hope, said nothing about the telegram to her, but he sent the following answer to Dr. Sherman: "Dr. Sherman, Rushton, N. H. Congratulations on your success. Will leave Las Vegas for Rushton at once. Will telegraph later time of our expected arrival."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### SQUIRE CALEB.

Caleb had now all the law business he could conveniently attend to. He had been counsel on a very important and hard fought case, and he had won. His name was already familiar all over the state and he was often called Squire by his neighbors. They were even talking of running him for the legislature next year. He had called frequently on Hilda and had suggested her selling the standing timber on her place in order to pay off the mortgage on the property, as he knew it was worrying her to have the place mortgaged. She was loth, however, to have the beautiful trees and groves destroyed and had not as yet decided. One day Caleb, after arriving at his office, opened his morning mail and was surprised at receiving a letter from a New York firm of lawyers. The letter read like this:

New York, N. Y.

Caleb Abbott, Attorney at Law, Rushton, N. H.

Dear Sir: Several years ago a company was formed for the purpose of buying land and claims in the Klondike region. It was known as the Klondike Gold and Land Company. The company has, however, with the exception of purchasing some claims, done no business whatever, owing to their lack of enterprise. A new board of directors is to be formed, who propose to go ahead and develop some of the claims. To do this will take money, and the new board propose to buy in the old shares now outstanding and to reorganize. There are a few shares of this company held in your town, by a party of the name of Cyrus Whitney. We desire that you see him and find out for us what price he sets upon his shares. If you can buy them cheap we will make it an object to you. Please let us hear from you soon.

Respectfully,

Fleecer, Grabbal & Company.

Caleb reread the letter. Then a broad smile overspread his face. "It is evident," he said to himself, "those shares are worth something." "If you can buy them cheap we will make it an object to you," he read again. "Well, I think I can get them cheap enough, but I am afraid, Messrs. Fleecer, Grabbal & Company, you will not get

them very cheap. I think I shall have to run over to New York myself," he said to himself. "That is," laughing, "if I can remove the country airs. Let's see," he humorously thought, "I must remember not to blow out the gas!" Ah, Messrs. Fleecer, Grabbal & Company, you little thought when you wrote to the country lawyer that he was one of the most interested parties in those stocks, and that the hay seed had already blown out of his hair.

That night Caleb called on Hilda and explained the contents of the letter. He also told her that he thought there was something back of it, that he believed it was best to go to New York to look into the matter personally. "That is, if you decide to sell the shares."

"You know, Caleb," she replied, "I know nothing of business, but I do know that father gave very little for those shares. Now I do not care to keep them, and should prefer to sell them, at the best figure I can get honestly."

"Yes," replied Caleb, "I don't know much about stock business myself, but I can inquire, and if

these stocks are listed, then I can find out the present market value."

"I will leave it entirely to your judgment, Caleb," she replied. "You have the stocks now in your safe, and you can fix it so that you can legally sell them."

"Suppose, Hilda dear," he said, "that I can get a good price for them, and that with them and some of the timber you can clear your home, will you set the day then, Hilda?"

"Yes, Caleb," she replied sweetly, "then I will tell you when—"

"When I am to be the happiest man in the world," he said, before she had finished.

Caleb went to New York the next week. After making a tour of Wall street, and also making a few inquiries, he dropped into the office of Fleecer, Grabbal & Company. Making known his errand he was ushered into the private office of Mr. Fleecer.

"Take a chair, Mr. Abbott; Abbott I believe is the name," he said. "Will you pardon me a moment? I have a little matter here I wish to finish."

"Certainly," said Caleb. "I am not pressed for

time," and taking up the morning Herald ran through the headlines. Mr. Fleecer sat at his desk apparently very busy with his pen. But he was in reality making a study of Caleb. "Not at all like the Mr. Abbott I pictured," he said mentally, "I am afraid it will be hard getting hold of those shares. Now, Mr. Abbott," he said, wheeling around, "about those shares of which we wrote you. I presume you have seen Mr. Whitney and obtained them?"

"No," Caleb replied, "Mr. Whitney is dead. I have, however, the shares in my possession."

"Ah!" said Mr. Fleecer, "and the figure?"

"Well, I have not quite decided as yet whether to sell or not," replied Caleb.

"Oh, I see," exclaimed Mr. Fleecer. "You bought them yourself. Do you think, Mr. Abbott, that was quite square considering our confidential letter to yourself?"

"I did not say I had bought them," replied Caleb. "But in regard to being square; is the stock business always conducted on the square here in New York and elsewhere? However, I have the right to dispose of the stocks if I see fit."

"Yes," replied Mr. Fleecer, who saw he had a hard subject to deal with, "and the price?"

"Well," answered Caleb, slowly, "I should like an offer. Then I might say whether I would sell or not."

"Ahem," began Mr. Fleecer, "they are worth five hundred to us."

"A share, Mr. Fleecer?" asked Caleb with a twinkle in his eye.

"A share?" replied Fleecer. "Are you crazy, man? Five hundred for the lot!" Caleb had arisen and taken a step toward the door. "Wait, you are not going?" asked Mr. Fleecer.

"You have made me an offer which I cannot consider. I suppose the matter rests there."

"Perhaps not; I have made you an offer; now suppose you state your price."

"Very well, Mr. Fleecer, you may have our shares for just five thousand dollars cash, or a certified check," said Caleb.

"Five thousand dollars!" screamed Mr. Fleecer, almost jumping from his chair. "Is that your lowest figure?"

"The very lowest," answered Caleb, "unless you

wish Messrs. Skinflint, Doem & Company to have them for four thousand five hundred."

"Have you seen Messrs. Skinflint, Doem & Company?" asked Fleecer.

"I have," answered Caleb, "and their offer is four thousand five hundred."

"Is it your intention to return to Skinflint, Doem & Company, and ask more, quoting our offer?"

"No," said Caleb. "I have given you our figures. I will close the deal at once if you are ready."

"I will give you a certified check, Mr. Abbott, but it is really more than the shares are worth. Still we wish to control the board of directors and with the addition of those shares we can just beat out Skinflint, Doem & Company."

Caleb left New York five thousand richer than when he arrived, and he did not blow out the gas either.

"Won't Hilda be pleased?" he thought, as, sitting in the smoking-compartment on his way back with a fine Havana between his teeth, he figured out that five thousand would much more than

clear her home, and that her beautiful trees would not have to be felled.

Marjorie, together with her father and mother, had returned; and Marjorie was again under Dr. Sherman's care. She was improving, moreover, she was able to take short walks and drives, and rejoice with her favorites again, the birds and the flowers. A pair of robins had built their nest in the apple tree almost beneath her chamber window. Marjorie took great delight in dropping crumbs to them from her window above; while they in return would sing their sweetest.

Jack Stevens had leased the Abbott place; he had married a sweet little lady from Boston and they had started upon their housekeeping.

Hilda had set the day which was to mean so much for Caleb and her, in October. She often ran over to see Marjorie. The engagement between herself and Caleb she never mentioned to Marjorie, fearing to cause her sorrow, as Hilda knew Marjorie's secret. Great was her surprise when one day Marjorie mentioned it herself, and also expressed a wish to stand up with her at the wedding.

"Oh, Marjorie," Hilda exclaimed, "if you only would! Could you do it?"

"And why not?" replied Marjorie. "Am I not getting well and strong again?"

"Yes, indeed," said Hilda, "and we are all so glad; but—"

"Oh, I know what you would say, Hilda," Marjorie interrupted, "but you need not fear. I have almost forgotten that. You know," with a blush, "there is another who is noble, too. I will give you just one guess, Hilda, dear," said Marjorie, "so put on your thinking cap."

"Let's see," said Hilda. "There's your cousin, in New York, that you have often spoken of, but you haven't mentioned him lately, so it cannot be he. There's Mr. Stevens, but he is already married. And the doctor,— Why! that's my guess, Marjorie, Doctor Sherman!" and she could tell by the color in Marjorie's cheeks that she had guessed aright. "Oh, Marjorie, I am so pleased!" Then, girl-like, they fell into each other's arm and cried.

* * * * *

If you are driving with a native through New Hampshire today and happen to pass through

Rushton that native will have a very busy time describing this hustling town. He will tell you that eight years ago at the time of the flood Rushton was a small way-back town; with one store and a small front room in a cottage house for a post office. He will tell you that today the population has more than doubled; that the town has concrete sidewalks, electric lights, new buildings; and fame! "See that big brick building way off there on the hill? That's the Sherman Hospital for the cure of consumptives! They are establishing hospitals for the cure all over the country, but that is the first one. You know this Doctor Sherman practiced in this town and discovered the cure here. Later, he sold out his practice, and now he gives his whole time to the hospital work. He's making lots of money, but then he doesn't need it. He married Samuel Upton's daughter. He was a New York banker, retired, who bought a place here. He's worth a million, so they say. He is the richest man in town. That house there we just passed was where Caleb Abbott was born and lived. You've heard of him of course. He's been to the legislature and they talk of sending him to

Washington to Congress next year. He married old Shylock Whitney's daughter. You remember old Shylock, the money lender. He was worth over a hundred thousand at one time, and then lost it all in stocks. That's where he used to live; that big house up there; we'll go by it in a minute. Squire Abbott lives there now. He and his wife, Shylock's daughter. This Squire Abbott? He's a wonder, a self-made man. Made his mark inside eight years, and ain't thirty yet, and he's the second richest man in town today."

THE END.

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